

# A MOUNTAIN MOLOCH

BY DUFFIELD OSBORNE, "A Spell of Ashtaroth," etc.

COMPLETE.



## LIPPINCOTT'S

JULY, 1897

### MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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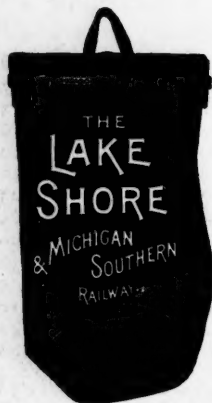
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# A MOUNTAIN MOLOCH.

BY

DUFFIELD OSBORNE,

AUTHOR OF "A SPELL OF ASHTAROTH," ETC.

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PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.

TO MY FRIEND  
CHAUNCEY CLARK STARKWEATHER.

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# LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

JULY, 1897.

## A MOUNTAIN MOLOCH.

### PROLOGUE.

I WONDER how soon the time will come when the world shall be so thoroughly explored and its peoples so cosmopolitanized that adventure and discovery will be things of the past. A few days since I should have said that this undesirable yet inevitable epoch was already present with us; that the field of real romance was even now synonymous with the field of professed fiction. No more Odysseys; no Circe; no Lotos-eaters; no more travels of Sir John Mandeville; no Prester Johns, with their mysterious courts. Even the wanderings of Captain Cook had begun to read like the works of the modern story-tellers whose very inventions bade fair soon to reach a limit, and then the world would have nothing to do but settle down to the dead level of studying humdrum facts and pursuing material improvements.

From this well-nigh morbid condition I have been suddenly rescued, and in a way that brings most forcibly to my mind how much may be hidden under little. Who would imagine that a tale almost as wildly improbable as the wildest fictions of Verne and Haggard had lain for decades concealed under the formal phraseology of a dust-covered report in the naval archives at Washington, and that the key to its secret was in the memory of but one man, who has but lately gone forth to explore that country which alone must remain undiscoverable to the eye and mysterious to the prying intellect of flesh-encumbered humanity?

I had been spending a few days in Washington, and, being invited to dine one evening by an official of the Navy Department, I strolled around to his office late in the afternoon. I found him almost at his wits' end. One of the annoying incidents of official life had just occurred. The Secretary of the Navy had sent for a certain document, and it could not be found. Clerks scurried hither and thither, or stood around in awed and expectant silence. As I entered, my friend came forward.

"Will you pardon me if I keep you waiting for a short time?" he said. "You see, in one of these general changes to which our political system is subject every four years, several filing-clerks have been dismissed, with the result that now and then some paper that's wanted might as well be at the bottom of the Red Sea. I don't believe the most perfectly devised system can entirely eliminate the personal element. Don't you want to come with me? I'm going myself into one of the file-rooms, where it is just possible that what we're looking for may have been misplaced."

Having nothing else to do, I followed him. Then I heartily regretted my foolish complaisance. Dust rose in clouds, as bundle after bundle was drawn out, hastily examined, and thrust back again to accumulate a new coat. Coughing and half choked, I was about to excuse myself and retire, when, as a clerk dived into a new pigeon-hole, a grimy, yellow document, unendorsed, fluttered to my feet. I picked it up gingerly.

"What's that?" said my friend, glancing hastily over my shoulder as I shook the paper open at arm's length. Then he added, in a tone of interest, "Why, hang it, if that isn't the report of the loss of the Falcon! How the deuce did it ever get in here, and in that shape?"

Taking it from me, he thrust it into his pocket, while I withdrew to the private office. He joined me there in half an hour, the dirtiest man I have ever seen outside of a coal-bin; but his search had been successful, and soap and water and clothes-brushes and clean linen were available. An hour later we sat down to dinner.

"Do you know," he remarked, suddenly, as we were sipping our coffee, "that paper you picked up was quite a find? Every now and then some such document is seriously mislaid, and a record of the loss is handed down from Secretary to Secretary, until most of them that are not at once replaced turn up sooner or later. This," he continued, taking it from his pocket, "has been missing since 1840, and we had entirely lost sight of the man who made it. Let me see." And he opened the pages and spread them out. "Shall I read it to you? It's short, and rather entertaining."

"Certainly," I replied, not especially interested, except in the satisfaction of my friend.

He read as follows:

"BRITISH FRIGATE HALDON, AT SEA,  
February 8, 1839.

"SIR,—On the 7th of January last, Easter Island bearing W.N.W., distant about ten leagues, the United States sloop of war Falcon, Captain Nathaniel French commanding, met with a hurricane which continued for two days with great violence, driving us south and west. Upon the storm abating, we found ourselves approximately in lat. 51° 20' S., long. 65° 9' W., being unable to determine more accurately on account of a deplorable accident to First Lieutenant Hasbrook. This officer was washed overboard on the night of the 7th while attempting to take an observation with the only sextant we then had, and the instrument was thus lost.

"The sky clearing on the 9th, land was sighted upon the starboard



quarter, two leagues distant, being an island about ten leagues in circumference, well wooded, and rising in the centre to a large cone-shaped mountain, evidently a volcano.

"No land appearing upon the chart at or near the point above indicated, Captain French determined to go ashore, and a landing was finally effected with much care and some difficulty.

"The island was found to be inhabited and fertile.

"We weighed anchor and sailed on the 18th of January, having experienced no further mishap except the loss of Second Lieutenant Vance, who was probably killed by the natives.

"On the 23d of the same month, at about 5.40 o'clock A.M., while sailing E. by N. with a free breeze, the ship ran upon a sunken coral reef and became a total wreck. The boats were broken or upset, and all hands lost with the exception of myself. While swimming with the aid of a plank, I came upon a small boat bottom up, and, having succeeded in righting it, was rescued three days later by the British frigate *Halidon*, bound for Valparaiso.

"With this report I beg to tender my resignation as surgeon in the United States Navy.

"I have the honor to be, sir,

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"BASTIEN DESHON, M.D.

"To Hon. Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D.C."

"That's really a most curious production," said my friend, after a short pause. "The writer does not seem to comprehend in the least the true interest of his report. One would think that the discovery of a new inhabited island would at least call for some little specific information."

"What else do you know about it all?" I asked.

"Why," said he, "all that the department has ever known was that such a report was received and almost immediately mislaid, and that Dr. Deshon never reported in person or by any further communication. There was some tradition to the effect that the document mentioned undiscovered land somewhere, and officers cruising in the Southern Pacific were directed to look out for it; but nothing was ever found, and I imagine they finally came to the conclusion that hardships had unhinged Deshon's mind. He was a Louisianian, from New Orleans, I think."

"Do you know how it strikes me?" I said.

"No; how?"

"I think the whole narrative shows a deliberate intention to conceal the material facts."

"But why report at all, then?"

"A sense of duty both to the government and the relatives of the lost men; the certainty that knowledge of his rescue would come out through his rescuers; the chance of his arrest as a deserter in case of his discovery and non-resignation,—any of these; probably a little of each. Then look at the report. It is unendorsed, which at once gives

it a good chance to get misled; it slurs over the most important features in a very marked way, and, to my thinking, is purposely vague in fixing the location of this island; while it announces a great discovery in words that are evidently intended to indicate a very trivial one. The most surprising part of it all, though, is the off-hand way in which it states that Lieutenant Vance was 'probably killed by the natives.' Do you suppose for a moment that any commander of an American man-of-war would leave such a question unsettled,—would allow his first officer to be assassinated without visiting severe punishment on his murderers? Then look at the surgeon's, to say the least, hasty resignation and non-appearance. Depend upon it, the whole thing is a careful attempt to conceal the facts and to avoid inquiry."

"It does look that way," said my friend, thoughtfully; "but what does the man want to hide?"

"Ah! there you've got me. Any one of a hundred things. I'm going to try to find out which."

"You?—how?"

"I'm going to look up Dr. Deshon."

"Probably he's been dead for years."

"More than likely; but all the same I'm going to start for New Orleans to-morrow morning. It's hard work for us poor novelists to find plots nowadays, and I can't afford to miss such a chance as this. Besides, I'm really very much interested."

That was the gist of our conversation, and the following day, armed with such information about Dr. Deshon as the navy records furnished, I set out for New Orleans.

Fortune favored me from the very first. At the only address which I had found in connection with his name—an old house in the most aristocratic part of the French quarter—resided a brother of the man I sought. This gentleman received me courteously, but with considerable reserve. Still, by the exercise of some diplomacy, I learned that after Dr. Deshon had resigned from the navy he had spent many years in travel, much of it solitary and in out-of-the-way regions; that finally he had returned to his home; that he was now living, though upwards of eighty years of age, and resided part of the year with his brother, and the rest on a small plantation a short distance from the city.

Then, to cut a long story short, I arranged to meet him, which I succeeded in doing under very favorable conditions, was invited to visit him at his plantation, won his confidence by that simplest of all methods, proving that I deserved it, and learned from his lips the narrative which I am going to tell. The only conditions he exacted were that I should not make it public until after his death, and that, as a precautionary measure, I should not seek to locate the island any further than he had done. I have since found reasons to confirm me in my belief that the official report was not only vague but positively misleading as to this point. However that may be, I was pained to learn of the doctor's death, which happened only a week after I left him; and you may believe me when I say that I would gladly have been compelled to withhold the story many years; for he was a charm-

ing gentleman, with all the frankness and hospitality of the old-school Southern planter grafted upon the tact, wit, and pleasing manners of his French ancestors.

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CHAPTER I.

## LAND!

It was the morning of the 9th of January, 1839. The hurricane, which for two days had driven the *Falcon* before it, abated almost as rapidly as it had commenced its revels, and the sun poured down upon the ocean, whose bosom still heaved with memories of the agitating breath of her tempestuous wooer. It was with considerable anxiety that land had been sighted a quarter of an hour before. Now, however, the feeling was quite different, as officers and men gazed out upon a richly wooded island, with the crater of a huge volcano rising up in its centre like the boss of an ancient shield. Buildings, low but of considerable extent and built of a white material, peeped here and there from among the trees.

Naturally the ship's company were deeply excited. A new island! a new people! It was with difficulty that, beating near as they dared, they curbed their impatience until the swell should subside sufficiently to permit of a landing being effected.

It soon became evident that the presence of the *Falcon* was the occasion of no less interest upon the shore. Crowds could be seen assembling on the beach and hurrying hither and thither,—men with dusky faces and wearing rough tunics of some dark material, while here and there among them were others with long white tunics and red cloaks. These latter seemed to be of a lighter complexion. Certainly they were in authority, for they carried short whips, with which they struck such of the rabble as pushed forward too roughly.

Soon, however, the attention of the Americans was distracted from the scene upon the beach. An exclamation from one of the sailors turned all eyes to where he pointed, and a boat, half galley, half canoe, was seen gliding out from behind a headland. Propelled by ten rowers, it swept toward the man-of-war. In the stern sat one of the red-mantled men like those noticed among the crowd. The oarsmen were dark, almost black, and naked but for short aprons that hung from their girdles.

Certainly the purpose of these visitors did not seem hostile, and Captain French made ready to receive them with all the ceremony he could muster, barring a salute, which he forbore firing for fear of its terrifying effect upon men probably unused to gunpowder. Nearer they came. Their craft, with its prow curved to the semblance of some animal's head, suggested in a measure those galleys of the ancients that were known as Liburnians. Now the rowers had brought her alongside, holding themselves well off with their great sweeps until a receding wave allowed them to glide near enough for him of the red cloak to grasp the companion ladder and mount to the deck.

He was a tall man, of lithe, athletic build, with complexion almost

as light as a Spaniard's and features like those of an Arab, while the thick, closely curled black beard added an even more Semitic character to his piercing dark eyes and prominent nose. His demeanor was entirely fearless and composed. His dress was as I have described it, —a white, sleeveless tunic reaching almost to the feet and confined at the waist with a belt, in which was thrust a short sword with a serpentine blade, somewhat like a Malay kris. A mantle, bright red in color, hung gracefully from his shoulders over bare, muscular arms, and his costume was completed with buskins fastened about the ankle with crossed thongs.

The crew of the Falcon had been piped to quarters while Captain French and Lieutenant Vance stepped forward to greet the stranger. The latter stood with arms crossed upon his breast and bowed very low, though with considerable dignity. Then he spoke slowly, pointing from time to time toward the shore. The language was entirely unlike any of the South Sea dialects, and such of the officers and men as were versed in tongues, civilized or barbarian, were summoned forward, but without avail.

Again the man endeavored to make his meaning understood, and this time an expression of deep surprise came over the first officer's face. He suddenly became closely attentive. Then he essayed to answer, in hesitating and uncertain accents, at which the other smiled indulgently. Nevertheless, much to the surprise of all, he seemed to grasp the sense of the American's reply.

Lieutenant Richard Vance was known throughout the service as a man of very studious habits, with a pronounced *penchant* for Orientalism. He was an excellent Hebrew scholar, and some of his fellow-officers even averred that he could speak ancient Egyptian. Be that as it might, he certainly was able to communicate, in a fashion, with his ship's guest.

After a few minutes of conversation, voluble on one side and halting on the other, Vance turned toward the captain and said, with a puzzled expression,—

"Perhaps you will laugh at me, but, unless I am strangely mistaken, this chap has been talking very decent Phœnician or Punic. I've rummaged a little in both, as far as a man can nowadays, and I'm pretty well up in Hebrew, which is practically a dialect of Phœnician, or *vice versa*,—God only knows which. The drift of it all is that he bids us welcome to the land of somebody named Merrak, and wishes to know whence we come, that he may make a report to his master. I've told him as well as I am able."

"Ask him if we can find a safe anchorage closer in shore," said the captain.

"Would you follow his piloting? It would afford an excellent chance for treachery," suggested Vance.

"Ask the question," said the captain, curtly.

Vance flushed, and, turning to the other, spoke at some length. Finally, with the aid of considerable gesticulation, his meaning was made plain. The islander replied that there was deep water and good bottom around the headland whence his boat had come, and that he



would consider it an honor to pilot the Falcon to a safe and convenient harbor.

The offer was promptly accepted. Addressing a few words to his boat's crew, he intimated that, if the ship would follow in their wake, it would find what was sought.

The anchor was thereupon weighed, and, with only her foresails set, the Falcon began to glide through the water churned into white foam by the strokes of the brawny oarsmen ahead. The stranger made no effort to leave the man-of-war's decks, and her officials were relieved from any necessity of openly detaining him as a hostage for the good faith and knowledge of his followers. He continued, however, to direct the course of the latter from time to time by shouted commands.

Vance leaned over the bow and observed the rowers. They were men of a type not especially different from other races of the Pacific, and unquestionably owned no racial kinship whatever with their commander. The mind of the lieutenant was busily employed trying to frame some theory which would explain the presence of such a man in such a place.

Richard Vance, executive officer of the Falcon since the death of Lieutenant Hasbrook, was in his thirty-first year, of middle height, and of a build calculated more for endurance than for any great muscular effort. His features would have been called strong rather than handsome, though gray-blue eyes, light brown hair that waved about his temples, and a drooping blond moustache went to make up a personality which was decidedly pleasing—to all but his commander.

Captain Nathaniel French was something of a martinet; an excellent officer, as the phrase goes; quick in action, and of undoubted courage. He lacked, however, all those finer attributes of the man that win and retain respect or affection. His manners were rough, and he scoffed at education beyond what might be necessary to make a report, keep accounts, and navigate his ship. Therefore it was not strange that he had never regarded with favor a student like Vance, whose greatest failing was that he saw too much of both sides of a question to let him take either with the best effect; and that gentleman's becoming first officer by the death of his superior had not served to soften the captain's dislike. Then, too, the sudden and unquestionable benefit to be derived in the present emergency from Vance's learning was regarded by Captain French very much as a direct and rather impertinent reflection on his own well-known views on such subjects.

Still the dark-bearded stranger stood with folded arms near the bowsprit. From time to time his eyes wandered over the ship and crew with an expression of curiosity and interest he could not wholly suppress. It was evident to all that this man was, to say the least, a very superior type of savage. All surmises, however, in this or other directions were abruptly broken off; for, as the Falcon rounded the headland, the curving shore of a well-indented harbor came into view. Here, sheltered from winds and waves, a dozen or more galleys, several of them of considerable size, rode at anchor or were drawn up on the beach. No houses appeared near the water; but some distance back,

upon rising ground and between the landing and the great mountain crest, the astonished eyes of the Americans made out what seemed to be a city of considerable extent and possessing no little claim to architectural beauty. Many of the buildings were lofty, and most of them, together with the walls, a long stretch of which was clearly distinguishable flanked at regular intervals with high towers, were built of some white material that glittered in the sunlight like marble, adding a brilliance to the general effect, though it seriously interfered with much detailed scrutiny.

The ship had approached to within perhaps half a mile of the bay's head when the pilot turned to Vance and indicated that they should come to anchor. The necessary orders were promptly given and obeyed. Everything had taken place so rapidly that even the power to wonder had been in a measure suspended. Now, however, at the captain's suggestion, Vance approached the man and requested that he would partake of some refreshment.

Bowing again very low, the latter replied that this was impossible; that there was one higher in authority to whom it was his duty to make an immediate report of the result of his visit, and whose pleasure he must learn with reference to the strangers.

Then, summoning his crew, he descended into the boat, and their long sweeps bore him rapidly toward the shore.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### MERRAK.

NOON came, and still there was no sign of movement upon the land. The galley had been drawn up on the beach, and the chief and his men had disappeared in the thick jungle that came down almost to the water's edge. Captain French began to grow impatient.

"Mr. Vance," he said, suddenly, as he ceased pacing up and down the deck and drew his watch from his fob, "if something doesn't develop within the next hour I shall not delay going ashore."

Vance bowed.

"What are your views?" he continued.

"I have no very definite views on the subject," replied the lieutenant, a little stiffly; "but I hardly think I should force matters, under the circumstances."

"No, I don't suppose you would. That's where we differ. You booky men would never accomplish anything. You'd spend all your time thinking it over and reasoning out your course, and when you'd made up your minds what to do, it wouldn't make much difference what you did."

Evidently pleased with this shot, he turned on his heel and continued his walk, glancing at his watch from time to time, as the sun began its downward course.

Vance's first impulse was to imprecate his commander in good Anglo-Saxon; his second, to do it in bad Punic; and his third, to laugh.

He compromised the matter by smiling,—perhaps the most irritating comment of all.

Just what Captain French would really have done never transpired, for suddenly the many eyes that had been spying out every foot of the shore-line, from the moment the ship had anchored, saw a strange procession issue from the woods. First came a confused and jostling crowd of the dark-skinned natives; then a company of perhaps fifty of the lighter race, clothed in their long white tunics and bearing round bucklers and drawn swords with serpentine blades. Closely following these and surrounded by other guards similarly dressed and armed, a gorgeous litter was borne out upon the sand, while behind it, bringing up the rear of the strange procession, walked eleven men, ten of them marching two and two, and the eleventh at their head. These latter, though evidently of the darker race, seemed, from their rich garments, to occupy a station not inferior to that of their lighter companions. They wore red tunics similar to the white ones of the others, and black mantles instead of red ones hung from their shoulders.

There was little if any confusion or delay in the movements of the entire concourse. The litter was set down, and a tall, black-bearded man stepped from it. All prostrated themselves before him. Then, accompanied by the armed men, who appeared to be his guards, and followed by those with the black mantles, he advanced to the water's edge and entered one of the small galleys, several of which were swiftly launched and rowed toward a great galley that, with a horse's head carved at the prow and twenty long oars protruding from either side like the legs of a centipede, rose and fell lazily about a cable's length from the shore. Quickly, and still with perfect order and decorum, the crowd mounted to her deck, he who was evidently their king or chief taking his place under a broad canopy that covered the high poop. The anchor was then raised, the oars swung to and fro, timed by the measured strokes of a mallet wielded by a man who stood at the prow, and, thus propelled, the vessel, with her sharp projecting beak parting the ripples like the blade of a cutlass, bore down upon the Falcon. Several of the latter's men fixed their eyes rather nervously on this dangerous ram and stole hasty glances at Captain French, who stood quietly upon his quarter-deck and awaited developments with apparently perfect confidence in the amicable intentions of the new-comers.

As the strange craft approached nearer she sheered gracefully off, her starboard oars were quickly withdrawn through their port-holes, and she was brought alongside the ship with an ease and accuracy of handling which no ordinary skill and training could have attained. Then, while some of the crews of both vessels employed themselves with fenders of rope or logs in keeping their sides from grinding against each other, a narrow gangway which had been raised upright against a stout post set at the bow of the galley—a contrivance strikingly similar to the ancient boarding-bridges used with such effect by the Romans—was let down upon the Falcon's deck, binding the two firmly together.

All hands had been piped to quarters to receive the august guest, who now arose from his couch beneath the awning and, supported by

two of his chiefs, crossed the bridge fearlessly. He was a large man, perhaps fifty-five years of age, and inclined to corpulence. His complexion was a deep olive, his beard black and curling, while upon his strong and rather haughty features was an expression of such profound weariness or depression that it might almost have been called despair. His dress was like that of the chief who had first visited the ship, except that his red mantle was deeply embroidered with saffron and around his brows ran a slender gold circlet.

With a careless glance at surroundings which could hardly have failed to excite in him a very lively curiosity, he approached Captain French. That commander bowed in greeting, but the other, without making any answering obeisance, spoke several words in a voice that contained the same suggestion of mingled pride and sadness which his face seemed to indicate.

The captain turned helplessly to Vance.

"He merely says that you are welcome," interpreted the lieutenant.

Meanwhile many of the escort of the island potentate had followed him aboard,—perhaps half of those who seemed to be his guards,—while the rest stood drawn up on the deck of the galley. The dark-faced men with red tunics and black cloaks had also crossed the bridge-way. Viewed closely, they were unquestionably of the same Polynesian race as the oarsmen and the rabble; but the sparse beards were shaven from their faces and the coarse black hair from their heads, while around the smooth brows of each ran a narrow band of gold, from the front of which rose an ornament of the same metal, which seemed made in imitation of a jet of flame. The fillet of one, a very corpulent man well advanced in years, with features that bore evidence, so far as features can, of a nature both cruel and crafty, was decorated with three of these golden flames.

"I say, Mr. Vance," whispered a young midshipman, irreverently nudging the executive officer in the back, "what'll you bet the dark gentry aren't clergymen? See how the black-bearded fellows make way for them and stand around and look respectful."

"But not very affectionate," replied Vance over his shoulder, for Midshipman Price was a favored individual on the *Falcon*.

Both remarks seemed not unwarranted. More than one of the officers were quick to note something peculiar in the relations existing between these representatives of two races, distinct and yet dwelling together upon an island hitherto cut off from the rest of the world. That the chief and those around him feared and showed marked deference to the others was perfectly apparent; that they nevertheless looked down upon them, in a manner, as inferiors, was almost equally clear. What in the men with lighter skins seemed the haughtiness born of a conscious superiority that owed some allegiance which it could not break was met by these members of a priestly caste (for Price was evidently correct in his surmise) with a suggestion of the insolence usually shown by inferiors who have in some manner laid their masters under subjection. Vance remarked all this very rapidly, as the priests, with the unrestrained curiosity of savages, passed hither and thither about the ship, handling everything within reach and casting none too friendly



eyes upon such of the crew as fell in their way. As for their leader, him of the three flames, there were at once tacitly established between himself and the lieutenant those unaccountably hostile relations which the first interchange of glances often carries between utter strangers.

Meanwhile the chief, with such of his followers as he selected, including the priests, was escorted into the cabin and entertained with all the form and courtesy which the navy regulations prescribed.

Through Vance a fairly intelligible conversation was possible, and the islander plied his entertainers with questions as to their own country and the causes which brought the ship to the neighborhood of his island. All these were answered as fully as Vance's vocabulary would permit, and the answers were received with close attention, but in a manner which gave no indication as to how they were regarded. The priests, too, listened attentively, and from time to time addressed remarks to each other in a strange and barbarous but unquestionably Polynesian dialect which was unfamiliar to all the Falcon's officers.

When, however, Vance, at the instance of Captain French, sought to question their guest in turn, he answered shortly and in a manner indicating that he held it his province to ask rather than to reply. This much, however, was learned :

The island was called by its inhabitants Karana, and was governed by himself, Merrak, under the title of Soveet. The white race to which he belonged considered themselves the nobility, or ruling caste. Their ancestors had sailed thither from far over the sea many ages since, and had gradually, by reason of their superior knowledge and power, gained an ascendancy over the native race, which had previously been very savage and primitive. Yes, the dark men with the flaming fillets were priests. They were of the aboriginal stock, because the strangers had adopted the religion of the island ; and on all theological matters these priests were very learned and held supreme sway.

Finally the Soveet, having eaten and drunk sparingly, signed to his followers to rise, and all ascended to the deck, where he made his farewells with the same reserve and dignity he had preserved throughout. Turning to Vance, he said,—

"Tell your master to come to my city to-morrow when the sun has reached half-way to the mid-sky, that I and my people may welcome you all." After a short pause, he added, "My servant Esbal—he who first greeted you—shall attend at the shore with a suitable escort, to look for your coming."

Without waiting for an acceptance of this command rather than invitation, he passed over into the galley. She pushed off; the oars rose and fell again to the rhythmic strokes of the mallet; the small boats relieved her of her company, as they had brought it to her; and the whole concourse vanished silently into the woods.

That night Dr. Deshon slipped into Vance's state-room for a smoke before retiring. The latter was deep in his books, and the surgeon puffed for a while at his cigar in silence. At last, unable to restrain his impatience longer, he said,—

"What do you make of all this business?"

Vance closed the book. "I don't make very much of it yet.

Events have followed so quickly on each other that they are all more or less mixed in my mind. As for conclusions, they are almost impossible."

"Haven't you an idea about these people?"

Vance smoked thoughtfully with knitted brows.

"I suppose I have a theory," he said at last. The doctor nodded, and he went on. "The language they speak is unquestionably a dialect of the Phœnician tongue, about which we don't know much except that it wasn't very different from Hebrew. Fortunately, I happen to understand Hebrew pretty well. I could get the sense of about everything the Soveet said, and could make some sort of fist at talking back. By the bye, did you notice his title? It's very suggestive of the old Carthaginian 'Suffet'; and the names Merrak and Esbal—especially the latter—are almost pure Phœnician or Punic. The horse-head prow to the galley is significant, too. It was the favorite Carthaginian device, you know."

"Then you think——?" said Deshon.

"I know this much," pursued Vance, leaning forward; "that the Phœnicians, and after them the Carthaginians, were the maritime people of the ancient world; that there are records to the effect that they sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar, down the coast of Africa, and perhaps around the Cape of Good Hope. Of course it's a good way from there to here, but I really don't see why it's impossible, and no other supposition will explain what we have seen and heard to-day. The more I think of it, the more I feel like qualifying what I just said,—that I had come to no conclusion. I have about come to a conclusion that these men are the descendants of some ship-load of Carthaginian exiles who were driven out in one of the faction fights so common in that city, and that, somehow or other, they were blown southwest around Cape Horn. You see they must have had their women with them, for it is quite evident that those we saw to-day have kept their stock clear from any native intermixture. As for the natives, the Soveet explained their presence and position naturally, if it needed any explanation."

"Well," laughed Deshon, "it looks very much, after all, as if you know all about it. You're too modest, my boy."

"I'll tell you what bothers me, though," said Vance, ignoring the last remark; "and that is the position and evident power of those priests. How did the inferior native race come to give its religion to the others? From what I saw of its ministers, it isn't a religion of love by a long shot. You can be sure that there's a very lively conflict going on here between church and state, with plenty of hard feeling thrown in."

"Then they really must have reached an exceptionally high plane of civilization," said the surgeon, laughing.

"Yes, but——"

"You don't mean to tell me you expect to solve that, too, to-night? I really never thought you were so conceited. Why, you haven't a scrap of data; and, moreover, I, as your physician, forbid it. For the general good, I'll allow you to puzzle over your Hebrew or

Phœnician, or whatever it is, for one hour longer, and then you must turn in."

Vance smiled. Deshon snapped his cigar-stump through the port-hole, nodded to the lieutenant, and returned to his own state-room.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### KARANA.

MORNING came. No sooner had the first shades of gray heralded the sun's advance up the ocean than all hands on the Falcon were awake and stirring. Both officers and men had too much upon their minds to sleep well, while Vance's appearance made it evident that he had lengthened the hour of study which the doctor had allowed him, until its measure was the night itself.

There was little preparation to be made for the visit to the shore, so the men had nothing to do but wait with such patience as they could command. Curiously enough, there seemed to be no fear of treachery from the islanders and no hesitation about trusting themselves among vastly superior numbers of a people about whom little or nothing was known. Nearly a third of the ship's company were detailed to remain aboard, much to their own disgust, and the shore party were to go fully armed; but, beyond these very obvious measures, no precautions whatever were taken. Probably Captain French relied, in case of attack, on the effect of their fire-arms, the operation of which he had ordered to be carefully kept secret. Certainly no advice was offered him by any one after the curt manner in which he had received Vance's former suggestion of prudence.

As for this officer, it is probable that the captain's dislike would have relegated him to ship duty for the day, but that the importance of the only man who could communicate with their hosts was too compelling to admit of such treatment: so the Falcon was left in charge of her second lieutenant, and the boats' crews gave way for the beach almost as soon as Esbal and the escort were seen issuing from among the trees.

Soon the keel grated upon the sand. As the men hurriedly disembarked, twenty black-beards, as Midshipman Price irreverently termed them, with their round bucklers and flame-blade swords, came forward and made obeisance. In a few words Esbal indicated that he would lead the way, and that his men would deploy at intervals on either side of their visitors in order to keep the rabble from pressing upon them: so, in this order, the march commenced.

A path, narrow and evenly paved with hexagonal blocks of lava, wound westward through the forest. Four men only could walk abreast, and the long column of one hundred and fifty of the officers and crew of the sloop of war, two and two, between their silent guides, pressed on, nervously conscious of the ease with which an ambuscade could assail their straggling array. It was with a feeling of sincere relief that Vance and Deshon saw the underbrush disappear and the trees thin out into a well-kept grove.

Then suddenly a spectacle burst upon their sight that caused them to halt in amazement. A broad plain, thronged with a motley multitude and dotted here and there with white villas of considerable extent, stretched away to the same brilliant city they had observed from ship-board, but grander and more beautiful a thousandfold at this nearer view. The scene was one of veritable enchantment, that wanted nothing but a few rocs and flying horses and genii-shaped clouds to make the beholders believe they had awakened on an Arabian Night, whence the slave of the lamp would shortly issue to perform their pleasure.

Not less than fifteen thousand men and women, all in holiday attire, crowded both sides of the path, which broadened out very considerably as it drew clear of the woods. A single glance at this vast concourse, weaponless and crowned with garlands, showed two things: first, its entirely amicable spirit, and second, the probable uselessness of resistance should treachery be intended. The march was resumed in a more condensed column, and men and women—the latter being all of the darker native type—swarmed around the foreigners, gazing upon them with curious but not unfriendly eyes, and striving to touch their persons or weapons whenever the whips of the escort were not to be feared. Very few of the ruling race, who seemed to occupy the position of both a military caste and a nobility, were in the crowd, and these evidently for the sole purpose of maintaining due order and decorum.

The city itself was now hardly half a mile distant. As they drew nearer, the walls were seen to be built, not of marble, but of great blocks of coral or some coral-like rock. It mounted in successive terraces along the gradually rising ground, and was evidently of even greater extent than the sea-view had given promise of. The gates were open; and Esbal, passing through, led the way up a broad, well-paved street. At this point the common people were left behind as though forbidden entrance, but the house-tops were thronged with the bearded nobles, while here and there could be seen the unmistakable flutter of female garments. Flowers, too, began to fall upon the procession, as it pressed on, more slowly, perhaps, as anxiety and distrust gave way to livelier curiosity.

Then came the grand *dénouement* of the march. A sudden turn of the way brought the head of the column upon a spacious public square, surrounded by buildings of much greater pretensions than those that bordered the streets. Porticos of white coral pillars formed their façades, fountains were playing here and there, while at the farther end of this magnificent plaza rose flight upon flight of steps, that extended its entire width, leading up to a broad platform upon which stood what was evidently the palace of the Soveet himself. In front of this building a brilliant assemblage was gathered. At least two thousand armed guards surrounded the canopied throne whereon sat Merrak, while a company of young girls, perhaps fifty in number, clustered behind it and viewed the new-comers with a curiosity which had in it much of welcome.

Dark spots, however, were not lacking to the festival array. On



either side of the throne, and beyond the circle of the guards, were drawn up dense bodies of priests, also armed with swords. Their black mantles served to cast a shadow over the rest of the concourse, and in their faces was nothing of the welcome that beamed elsewhere. At one corner of the square rose the windowless walls of a great tower-like structure, evidently of some military strength, and built entirely of blocks of lava,—a gloomy fortress amid the houses and palaces of white coral that glittered on every side. A second glance showed that its summit was thronged with priests.

"I say," whispered Midshipman Price to Deshon, "there's the temple of these fellows' god, whoever he is. I'll bet he's a pretty grim sort of deity."

"He must be an improvement on Moloch," said Vance. "I hardly wonder that our Carthaginian friends, if that's what they are, thought nearly anything would be a beneficial change. But wait a bit; I'm going to try a little scheme of my own, later on."

Further conversation was stopped, for now the Soveet rose from his throne, and, descending, embraced Captain French with every sign of welcome.

"I hope the court ladies will adopt that style of greeting," remarked Price, in a remarkably resonant whisper. The captain glanced back and frowned, while Vance, stepping forward at the same moment, said,—

"Soveet of Carthhadtha, we place ourselves as guests in your hands."

A look of intense surprise flashed across the calm face of the other. Then, composing himself with an effort, he replied,—

"Young man, you speak words that may mean much, for you name the name that tradition says was borne by the birthplace of my race."

The eyes of Vance were radiant with triumph as he communicated his words and the reply to the group of astonished officers. Then he turned again to the Soveet.

"To my nation," he said, "much is known. It was not difficult to divine the origin of the men who govern this island which you call Karana."

The potentate, who had now regained all his dignity, bowed in acquiescence with the explanation.

"Let your people now enter my house," he said, "and they shall receive such hospitality as we can offer."

So saying, he led the way within, under the portico, through a broad hallway, and out into an open court evenly paved and with fountains playing at the four corners. Here were many tables piled with an Oriental profusion of fruits and other edibles, while women of the darker race were busied drawing from great sacks a thick syrup-like liquor, which they mixed with water and poured into cups of metal ranged along the boards. Long benches were provided for the accommodation of the guests, and officers and sailors made short delay in partaking of this unusual feast; the former being seated apart near a couch whereon the Soveet reclined at the farthest side of the court.

Priests and nobles occupied many of the tables. All men drink in the same language, and under the warming influence of the liquor—rather a sweet, heavy cordial than a wine or a spirit—tongues were loosened, reserve was in a measure thrown aside, and the men of the Falcon soon became friendly with their hosts, or at least with the Karanian nobles.

Around the court on every side were galleries with little curtains fluttering between slender pillars; and behind these it was evident that the ladies of the Soveet's household were watching the festivities. Dark eyes could be seen peering curiously here and there between the hangings, and now and then the pretty ripple of suppressed laughter was borne down to the ears of the feasters below. Glances, too, were from time to time cast upward, but evidently these beauties preferred or were obliged to be very chary of their charms.

Suddenly Vance clutched Dr. Deshon's arm tightly. The latter started. "What's the matter?" he said. The lieutenant did not answer for a moment. He was looking fixedly up at the gallery directly above the Soveet's couch, and the surgeon, following the eyes of his friend, was almost startled into a like unconsciousness of all around them.

Between two curtains that were held apart by hands as small as those of a child but having all the slender delicacy of a woman's, they saw a face so beautiful that no man could see it and look aside. Of a delicate tea-rose tint, flushing warmer where the blood rose in the cheeks, with long Oriental eyes that seemed to draw their light from some fountain of liquid fire far behind them, a broad low brow clouded with a mass of hair black as night, and a mouth for which Gabriel might have joined the hosts of Satan,—it was no wonder that Vance and Deshon could only sit and gaze speechless. But there was a charm about the face that was more than that of mere feature. An expression of indescribable sadness lay in the eyes, and the mouth seemed almost about to utter a supplication. It suggested vaguely to Deshon the look that the face of the Soveet wore, but in a woman and a beautiful one it roused very different feelings, and seemed to call out every chivalrous impulse that a man's nature could comprehend.

It was evident that her action had been entirely unconscious, for suddenly she seemed to realize that the eyes of Vance were almost burning into her own. Drawn down as if by some irresistible impulse, her gaze fell, and, for a moment, she looked straight at him. The color slowly deepened in her cheeks; then they paled, and Deshon could almost see the effort with which she stepped back and allowed the curtains to drop together.

When the surgeon turned toward his companion he was almost frightened at his face. It was white as the coral of the table before him, and his look was still fixed rigidly upon the swaying curtains.

"Come," said Deshon, sharply, "you'll attract attention. Your friend the high-priest, or whatever he is, is looking at you."

Vance recovered himself with an effort. "Did you ever see anything half so beautiful?" he said, slowly.

"Frankly, I don't believe I ever did," replied the doctor; "but

all the same you mustn't get yourself and perhaps all of us in trouble by any inadvertent captivation. You know the most marked difference between barbaric and savage peoples is that the former are usually very jealous of their females; and these fellows are pretty well up in the barbaric scale."

"Deshon," said Vance, "I'm going to marry that woman."

"Nonsense! You're crazy," exclaimed the surgeon.

"I know it," said Vance. "I always told you I was a fool about some things; but I think you'll admit that even French couldn't growl at me on the score of indecision——"

"I say, Mr. Vance," came the voice of the captain from further up the table, "you're not doing your duty as the only man who can keep up our end of the conversation. Ask the old Soveet—or whatever you call him—whether that volcano up there is in working order or has gone permanently out of business."

Vance put the question mechanically, but the effect produced was startling in the extreme. The face of the Soveet grew pale, and, rising hastily from his couch, he crossed his arms upon his bosom and bowed low toward the mountain's crest, above which hung a film of mist or vapor. Such of the nobles as caught the tenor of Vance's question, and all who saw the action of their ruler, immediately prostrated themselves upon the ground. The priests alone remained seated. A hurried whisper seemed to pass among them, and their frowning brows met the astonished eyes of the Falcon's officers wherever they turned to seek some explanation of the disturbance.

At length he of the triple flame stood up, and, stretching his hands toward the mountain, seemed to address it. He spoke in what was evidently the aboriginal dialect. Then he turned and spread his arms over the prostrate Karanians, speaking again in a low, deep voice. His face had become absolutely expressionless. Suddenly he ceased, and the people rose slowly to their feet.

After this strange incident, Captain French noticed a certain constraint in the manner of his entertainers, and, deeming it best to resume relations at some more propitious season, he took an early opportunity to bid the Soveet adieu and give the orders to return on shipboard. It was none too soon, for the day had passed quickly, and the sun was well down toward the horizon when the man-o-war's-men issued from the palace.

Since he had caught a glimpse of the beautiful Karanian, Vance had been like a man in a dream; and now, as he descended the long sweep of the steps, his abstraction seemed to bear fruit. His foot slipped at the lowest step, and he fell heavily to the pavement. Dr. Deshon was at his side in a moment, as the lieutenant raised himself on one knee.

"Not hurt, are you?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I am—a little," said Vance, with a grimace of pain.

"Where?" queried the surgeon.

"My ankle," replied Vance. "Easy, there; don't wrench it," he added, as Deshon proceeded to make a hasty examination.

"Nothing broken," he said, at last, "and I don't find any swelling. See if you can't get up."

Vance tried to stand, but immediately sank back again with a groan. The Soveet and those of his suite who were nearest appeared deeply concerned, and were profuse in their offers of aid.

"I think you had better leave me here for the night," suggested the lieutenant. "It's late. There's no sense in my hampering your march, and you can send a hammock for me in the morning. The old fellow here says he'll take care of me."

Deshon looked hard at the injured man. Then he leaned over and said, in a voice too low for the rest of the officers to hear,—

"Dick Vance, you're no more hurt than I am. It's all put on, and that woman's at the bottom of it. For God's sake, don't be a fool."

"Don't speak so loud," the other whispered. "I *must* stay here for the night. There are one or two things I'm bound to get to the bottom of. I'll promise to be careful, though, doc. Don't you worry, old man," he continued, as the surgeon hesitated. "I'm old enough to look out for myself, and there isn't a bit of danger."

"I'm not so sure of that," muttered Deshon, again appearing to examine the injured ankle.

"Well, I don't care if there is, then ; and, besides, I've got to live up to my new character for decision."

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Captain French, bustling up. Word of the accident had recalled him from the head of the column.

"I'm afraid," said the surgeon, slowly, "that we shall have to leave Lieutenant Vance here until we can send a hammock for him in the morning. His ankle appears to be—sprained—or strained ; and these people say they are ready to take care of him. I shall stay, of course, too."

Captain French frowned. "Can't he walk?" he asked.

"No," replied Vance, quickly, before the surgeon had time to answer.

The captain hesitated a moment, deeply annoyed.

"Well," he said, finally, "we certainly can't all spend the night here, and if Mr. Vance has got to stay, I suppose he must. I won't run the risk of leaving you, though, doctor. He'll have to take his chances,—that's all. Fall in there, men."

Deshon looked troubled, but he had allowed himself to go too far for withdrawal, and he knew the hopelessness of remonstrating.

Reluctantly he retired with the others, but, glancing back as they entered the street, he saw two of the islanders lift his friend up and carry him back into the palace.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ZELKAH.

THE lieutenant found himself domiciled in a small room opening off one of the galleries that surrounded the court of the Soveet's house. His apartment was fitted up with considerable taste, not to say luxury.

The small couch was covered with a velvet-like cloth dyed red. Hangings of the same color draped the walls, and mats were spread upon the floor. There were no windows, and ventilation was had through a row of small square apertures near the ceiling, which could not be closed except by a short curtain running upon a rod. A metal lamp in the corner shed a soft, rich light over everything.

Scarcely had Vance been placed upon the couch by his bearers, when the Soveet himself, attended by several nobles and a single priest, entered.

"I have brought to you one of our physicians," explained his host, at the same time indicating the priestly visitor. "He is skilful, and will examine and attend to your hurt."

"I cannot thank you enough," replied Vance, with some embarrassment, which he found it impossible altogether to conceal. He felt that the eyes of the priest were reading him, and that he must get rid of that individual's services or run a very serious risk of his ruse being exposed.

"Surely you will understand me," he went on, after a moment's hesitation, "when I say that we are accustomed only to the methods of treatment of our own physicians. Besides, I do not think the hurt is at all serious," he added, noticing the expression of surprise that crossed the Soveet's face. "I shall be all right in a day or so: in fact, the pain is less now. Rest will be all it needs, and I shall not ask you for more than this and a little food."

"As you wish," replied the other, in impassive tones. "My women shall attend you and provide for your wants."

He turned and passed out with his attendants, the priest-physician being the last to leave.

As the latter disappeared, he cast at Vance a look which certainly was not altogether friendly, and which made the American congratulate himself with considerable fervor that he was out of such hands, at whatever cost. His reflections, however, were by no means complimentary to his tact.

"I'm making a fearful mess of it," he pondered. "I wonder how many of these people suspect me. I should think they all would." Then he tried to fix his mind calmly upon the events of the last two days, with all their wonderful import. What a crazy scheme this last one of his was! What could it possibly accomplish? What did he want to accomplish?

His meditations were interrupted by a soft footfall in the corridor without. Then a woman's voice asked if its owner might serve the stranger with food and drink. Vance's heart bounded at the accents, only to subside as rapidly a moment later when, before he had composed himself sufficiently to answer, two girls entered the room.

They were undeniably pretty, but not with the beauty of which he dreamed, and he watched them as they drew a small table near his couch and spread out upon it a repast of fruits, goat's milk, bread, and a sort of cheese-cake. She who had spoken did not address him again, probably presuming, from his failure to answer before, that he was ignorant of their speech, but from time to time both glanced at the



invalid with eyes wherein curiosity and interest were mingled with shyness. At last the younger spoke to her companion in a low tone:

"This cannot be the stranger whom you imagined our mistress was pleased to observe. That was the one who interpreted for them, and this man did not understand my words."

"Very possibly it is not," replied the other, shortly, "but such things are not for you to chatter about."

One idea after another thronged through the lieutenant's brain. These girls would soon be gone. He must arrange to see his lady of the balcony, if only for a few moments; and yet, could he trust them? Would not even a disclosure of the fact that he understood their language be of disadvantage, after they had spoken as freely as they had?

"You had better straighten out that cloth," said the older girl of the two. "The Lady Zekah will perhaps come to see if we have served him well, and you will be punished."

Vance felt his face flush and grow pale again. She was coming,—coming to visit him. He should see her again and speak with her. At that moment, as if to make the words good, a rustle of garments sounded from the corridor, and the veritable princess of his dreams stood before him in the door-way. A white tunic with open sleeves, belted at the waist with a gold cincture, and fastened here and there with curious jewels, fell to her feet, while a long mantle, suspended from brooches at the shoulders and caught again at the waist, hung in graceful folds about her. Her face was even more beautiful than when Vance had seen it through the curtains. After a moment's hesitation, she stepped forward into the room. The maids, together with two others who had accompanied her, stood with bowed heads and arms crossed upon their bosoms.

As for the American, from the moment she had entered, his eyes were powerless to look aside; but the girl did not seem to notice the intensity of his gaze. She approached the couch and met his glance with one in which sympathy and interest were blended with a childish frankness.

"Are you hurt much? Have you been well attended?" she inquired.

Vance's resolution was quickly taken.

"I am not hurt at all," he replied, in a low whisper. "I wanted to see you again. Will you forgive me for telling the truth?"

She shrank back. Fortunately, none of the maids could have caught his words, but the two who had first entered could see that he had answered their mistress, and were at once plunged into evident confusion and despair at the recollection of their indiscretion. Vance felt that he must disarm any possible enmity on their part, and he added,—

"I have been better cared for than I could dare ask, and your maids are as kind as they are beautiful."

She was now meeting his look with an expression of deep and serious thought, while the color bloomed and faded and bloomed again in



her cheeks. Then, with a little air of imperiousness mingled with embarrassment, she turned to the attendants.

"Withdraw to my apartments and await me there," she said.

The women bent their heads and retired, not without their faces indicating some surprise. When they had gone, their mistress came close to Vance and asked,—

"Why did you wish to see me?"

If he had ever harbored an instant's doubt as to his feelings, it had been dispelled long since. Time and words were very precious, and risks were not to be considered.

"Because I love you," he replied.

Again she drew back with a startled look.

"Oh, no, no!" she murmured. "That is impossible. You do not understand. You cannot."

Vance had risen from the couch, heedless of the danger of interruption. He came up to her and took her hands.

"What is impossible? and why may I not love you?" he said. "You are not one that it is hard to love, and surely you are the wife of no man?"

She shook her head, and an expression almost of horror came into her eyes.

"Do you not know that I am the Soveet's daughter?" she replied.

Vance was troubled by her words, although he had already felt certain as to her identity and had discounted it in his calculations. It could hardly fail to make success more difficult, but the thought of ultimate failure was one that he had firmly put out of his mind from the first.

"I know I am very presumptuous," he said; "but I love you, and your father will give you to me. I am not without rank in my own country,—a country so vast that many thousands of islands like this could be compassed within its boundaries, and where the tide of men and women in a hundred cities streams back and forth like foam-flecks in the surf."

It is an old saying, and one about which there can be no manner of doubt, that languages should always be taught by pretty women who can understand no tongue but the one to be learned. Vance felt that he could have talked on forever in this strain. The halting words halted no longer; but the expression which came slowly over her face checked his speech as with a sudden chill. It was the same look of inexplicable sadness that he had seen through the curtains of the porch. She made a gesture with her head as if begging him to be silent; then, drawing her hands from his, where they had rested in seeming unconsciousness, she stepped back. He found himself seized with a premonition of evil, such as sometimes descends on men's hearts to warn them of approaching disaster. Twice she tried to speak, and her words came at last with an unnatural force.

"Do not dream of such things," she said. "I tell you, what you talk of is impossible,—utterly."

Then he began to realize how absurdly sudden his declaration had been.

"Do not misunderstand me," he pleaded. "I should not have spoken to you as I did. I cannot hope that there should be now in your heart any such love as is in mine; but, remember, I remained only to see you, and I knew if this opportunity were lost I might never win another. Forgive me for startling you with so sudden a suit, will you not? I felt that I must tell you."

The slender frame of the girl seemed agitated by some deep emotion.

"Listen to me, of whatever race you be," she said, "that you may know that it is not surprise or foolish bashfulness that restrains me,—that I can be as frank as yourself when my heart demands it. I, Zekah, the daughter of Merrak the Soveet, love you; and yet I say you must put me from your soul. There are reasons which I cannot even name that would make your suit your ruin."

As she spoke, Vance had stepped toward her, and now he drew her close to him.

"Do you think for a moment," he said, "that people who love give up those they love, and who love them, because of a little danger? I shall take you to our ship, and there is no power upon this island which can wrest you from me."

A noise in the gallery without came to their ears. She raised her arms, and, drawing his head down quickly, kissed him. Then she sprang away.

"You must never think again of what has happened to-day," she said, in a low, sad monotone.

She was gone, and the next moment the form of the physician-priest darkened the door-way. The man's face wore a sardonic smile when he saw the invalid standing erect in the middle of the room, but his voice was superciliously soft and deferential as he said,—

"I was bidden by the Soveet to visit you again, but I see your foot has already no need of my care. I will report to him that you are improved."

As he turned to go, Vance stepped forward, barely remembering to limp painfully. He felt a strong impulse to strike his unwelcome visitor to the ground, hasten after Zekah, and compel her to accompany him to the shore; but the absurdity of such a mad course was too apparent for even a lover to harbor the thought long.

"You will tell the Soveet, also," he said, savagely, "that I desire an audience of him in the morning,—at daybreak, if he will."

The priest bent his head, still with the same disquieting smile of mingled cunning and malice, and withdrew, while Vance, again unmindful of his pretended hurt, fell to pacing the narrow room. Sleep, however much needed, seemed impossible, and then, too, he felt that there were influences at work which might make it imprudent to resign himself to a single moment of oblivion. It was almost morning before Nature irresistibly asserted her rights, and his eyes closed for a short hour's preparation for what he had determined should be a day of battle against the fates that opposed him.

## CHAPTER V.

AROO.

SUDDENLY he awoke with a start. The gray light of morning was stealing into his room, and by his couch, looking down at him, he saw the smiling face of the same priest. He was conscious of a shock to his nerves in realizing how completely he had been in the power of a man whom he felt to be his enemy. The after-thought was, however, more composing. He was safe. Therefore it seemed evident that assassination was not a danger to be anticipated.

"It is morning," said his awakener. "The Soveet will receive you; and, if you can walk readily, I will lead you to him."

Vance could not detect the least tinge of sarcasm in the tone.

"Or would you eat, first?" continued the other.

"No," said Vance, decidedly. "If you will lend me your shoulder to rest upon, I think I can go with you; and I prefer to go at once."

No further words were spoken, and the lieutenant, having hastily made himself as presentable as possible, limped slowly out, leaning upon the arm of his guide.

The galleries, corridors, and halls through which they passed seemed interminable, but at last they reached and entered a small chamber. The Soveet was seated upon a curiously carved chair with curving feet, on either side of which stood one of his nobles. Vance glanced hastily at his face, to divine, if possible, whether he had been inspired with any suspicions, but it wore only the expression of passive, hopeless melancholy which he had before remarked.

In a few words Merrak questioned his guest as to his injury, and expressed a courteous pleasure to learn of its improvement. Then came an embarrassing silence.

"Grant me," said Vance at last, nerving himself for his course, "that I may speak with you in private. There are things I would say which it may be well that no other should hear."

The Soveet looked fixedly at the young officer for a moment, and, turning to his attendants and to the priest, made a sign that they should withdraw. Then he bent his eyes again upon his guest, and said,—

"Speak now."

The American's words came to him halting and uncertain, but he gained in self-control and fluency as he felt himself launched upon the struggle which must make or mar his life.

"Is it contrary to your law," he asked, "that your daughters should wed with strangers?"

"No such question has ever come before us," replied the Soveet, slowly. "We have long been a people dwelling apart and knowing nothing of men beyond, except by the old traditions. Nevertheless, I see no reason why such marriages should not be."

"Then hear me," cried Vance, eagerly. "It is I who would marry one of your maidens. I am rich. In my country there are no kings or soveets or nobles, but each man is a ruler to himself under the law.

To such a land I would take her of whom I speak, and I can offer much to recompense her for the rank and pre-eminence she may surrender. It is——"

Vance hesitated, doubtful how to disclose the identity of the object of his suit. The Soveet raised his hand.

"It is not necessary that you should say more," he said. "All that has happened has come to my ears. I know who it is that you seek, and I know what you have done that you might speak with her. It is even possible that your fair face may have won favor in her sight, nor do I altogether condemn you, for I know that it is the part of youth to be rash and heedless in such matters. But do you listen now to my words. What you ask is utterly beyond the power of man to grant,—even beyond mine, who am Soveet of all this land and its peoples. Though my heart were with your desire, yet it would be hopeless. Let this matter be to you, then, as a dream which has passed before your closed eyes, for no more than this can it ever be."

Vance stood silent and dumfounded at this disclosure of Merrak's knowledge of all his acts and motives. There was something, too, in the ruler's voice that seemed despairingly decisive. The latter looked pityingly at the young man.

"Do not think," he resumed, in a gentle tone, "that I am hostile to you or your people, or even that I do not recognize certain advantages that might come to me from such a marriage as you propose. You are doubtless more powerful than we in many ways; but there is a power nearer at hand which overmasters any inclination I might have in your favor."

A feeling of mingled determination and revolt had gathered strength in Vance's breast as the Soveet spoke, and, when the latter had concluded, he burst out,—

"Whatever the powers may be that oppose what I desire, let me have but your consent to contend against them. My people do not fear shadows, and I even accept your words as an omen of success."

Merrak seemed to ponder deeply. It was evident that he was laboring under strong agitation. At last he said,—

"I do not wish you to doubt my friendliness nor my will to serve you. It is, therefore, my wish that you should see how powerless I am."

Rising, he struck a gong that hung over his seat, and immediately one of the nobles presented himself, bowed low, and stood with folded arms awaiting his master's orders.

"Beg the Lord Aroo, the favorite son of Tao, to grant me his presence on a matter of most serious import."

The noble bowed again and disappeared, while Merrak sat with chin buried in his robe.

After a few moments, that seemed an age to Vance, he saw the heavy curtains that veiled all the sides of the room agitated near the Soveet's chair. Then they parted, though there had been no sign of a door-way observable at that point, and the figure of Aroo, the high-priest, stood in the aperture. The deep red of his long sleeveless gown

seemed in malignant contrast to the black of his cloak, while the triple flames upon his fillet gleamed with a fire as baleful as that which lay in his black, bead-like eyes. As his glance stole from the Soveet to the American and rested at last upon the former, Vance felt more strongly than ever that he was in the presence of a bitter enemy.

Rousing himself from his gloomy revery, Merrak communicated to the priest in a few words the nature of the stranger's request. The face of the listener lost nothing of its impassiveness and inscrutability during the recital.

"And you have answered?" he asked, when Merrak had finished.

"Nay, I have summoned you that you might answer."

"The Soveet honors too much the servant of Tao," replied the priest. "Were there then no laws that might have guided him in replying to such a question?"

The lines of trouble deepened upon Merrak's brow.

"The case was novel," he replied, in a timid and hesitating manner.

"But is not the law ancient and immovable?" said the other, quickly. Then he came closer, and, speaking in the native dialect, seemed to reproach and, at times, almost to threaten; while the Soveet sank back trembling in his chair, and made a motion as if to cover his face.

Vance viewed the strange spectacle with mingled feelings, among which astonishment and indignation predominated.

"You refuse my suit, then?" he said sternly to the priest, when the latter had turned from the stricken ruler.

"I refuse not that which it is not in my place either to grant or to refuse," was the reply.

"But you have advised your master to refuse?"

"I have advised the *Soveet*," replied the priest, raising his head and meeting the angry eyes of the American with a look serpent-like in its steadiness, "that he obey the laws, that the god of the land shall not destroy him and his people. Least of all would I favor a stranger whose course has been one of duplicity, from the feigning of injury to the violation of hospitality toward the daughter of his host."

Vance made a step toward his accuser. Then he checked himself, remembering his surroundings and the madness of attempting to resent the priest's words. The latter had put up his hand as if to command silence, and he now continued with dignity,—

"Know, too, that the daughters of our Soveets are reserved for a higher destiny than to become the brides of wandering foreigners who choose to admire them; a destiny noble in its office and glorious in its reward. It is Aroo, the favorite son of Tao, that has spoken in defence of his father's rights and in behalf of a people exposed, even by this moment of their ruler's weakness, to just wrath."

The Soveet uttered an exclamation of horror and pleading, and Vance glanced quickly toward his shrinking figure. When he turned again, the priest had gone, and only the agitation of the hangings indicated the place of his exit.

"How dared that man——?" began the American, hotly, but the other checked him with pale face and trembling lips.



"Utter no evil of the god Tao," he said, hurriedly, while his eye sought the still swaying curtains in evident terror.

"Surely you do not fear him,—you, the ruler of this island?" cried Vance, a strain of contempt mingling with the surprise that rang in his voice.

"You do not know,—you cannot know or dream," replied the Soveet, struggling to regain his composure. "Therefore do not talk of what you know not, or think to contend against a power that is too strong for you, and even for me."

"Too strong for you it may be," said the American, carried away by the force of his feelings, but speaking very slowly and deliberately. "Whether it be too strong for me, I shall take occasion to make trial."

He checked himself, realizing at once that he had said too much; but the Soveet, far from being offended at his guest's words, seemed even to regard him more favorably, and a gleam of something almost like hope lighted up his sad face. Whatever might have followed was, however, cut off by the return of the same noble who had gone to summon Aroo into the royal presence. He came to announce that men from the great ship had arrived to take the stranger back to his friends.

Vance hesitated a moment. There seemed to be nothing more for him to do now, and he felt, too, that whatever he attempted in his present excited condition would be as apt to work injury as good. There was, above all, the need of time to think over and weigh what had happened and to lay his plans and obtain such assistance as he might require to carry them out. Certainly the girl could not be in any immediate danger, although the vague fate that hung like a cloud over her own and her father's happiness must be one of more than usual horror. A life of enforced religious seclusion—the explanation he had first grasped at—seemed entirely disproportionate to the deep-settled melancholy it inspired. True, these people were in a measure barbarous,—especially the priesthood; and yet it would be insanity to act now upon any of the surmises that came thronging to him unsought and made his blood run cold. He must have time to think.

Turning, therefore, to the man, he signified that he would accompany him. Then, having made his formal acknowledgments and adieus to the Soveet, who seemed almost unconscious of his speech and presence, he passed out of the room, leaning upon the arm of the messenger.

As they crossed the great court, Vance could not restrain his eyes from roaming over the galleries to seek some sign of Zekkah's presence; but the curtains hung motionless, and the entire building seemed devoid of life or movement.

Before the palace, they found six sailors provided with a hammock, but the lieutenant put it aside on the plea that his ankle was much improved, and, taking the arms of two of the men, he walked back through the city and along the path to the shore, whence a waiting boat soon conveyed him to where the Falcon lay swinging lazily at her anchorage.



## CHAPTER VI.

## CAPTAIN FRENCH.

CAPTAIN FRENCH stood upon the quarter-deck and watched his executive officer being assisted up the side. Vance promptly limped forward and reported for duty.

"How's your foot?" asked the captain. "I see you favor it a bit yet. Better see Deshon about it."

"I think I'm practically all right," replied Vance. "It doesn't bother me much now."

"Well, no doubt you're the best judge," said French, turning away.

Vance hesitated. Had he not realized that the captain was no friend of his, he would have been strongly tempted to make a confidant of him, at least to a considerable degree. Even as it was, he considered that it would be just as well to know at once how much aid he might expect from that quarter.

"Pardon me, Captain French," he began.

The latter turned.

"There is a matter concerning which I should like to have a few words with you,—in your cabin, if you are disengaged."

The captain eyed him sharply for a moment.

"Certainly, Mr. Vance," he said. "If you will come with me now, I shall be glad to listen to you."

He led the way below, and the lieutenant followed. Soon they were seated in the captain's room.

"Well," said the latter, pushing a decanter of whiskey toward his visitor, "help yourself, and let's hear what you have to say."

Evidently Captain French was in a good humor, and Vance launched out into his narrative. He detailed rather fully but guardedly the facts which had led him to the conclusion that the daughter of the Soveet was in danger from some form of fanatic influence, taking especial care to suppress all that bore upon his personal interest in her welfare. Whatever else the captain might be, he was not a suspicious man, and, where another might have surmised or probed for a motive in his lieutenant's action, he simply took the story as it was told him, and, upon its conclusion, went straight to the practical side of it all, with the question,—

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"It seems to me that we should take measures that will prevent any harm from coming to the woman, and, if necessary, carry her away on the Falcon."

The captain bit the end off a cigar, lit it, puffed once or twice, and replied,—

"I can't say that I see it in just that light, Mr. Vance."

"Do you mean to say that you do not conceive it your duty to prevent an act of barbarism which may result in the death of a woman of rank?"

"Look here, now, Mr. Vance," said French, taking the cigar from his mouth; "I don't know what's started you on this ultra-humani-

tarian tack, but I'll tell you how it strikes me. In the first place, you haven't a single scrap of evidence that these people intend to injure the girl. All it amounts to is that she and her father seem blue and appear to be under the thumb of a priest who has some plans for her future. Perhaps she's engaged to marry him; perhaps she's vowed to some kind of a South Sea nunnery. These people are not savages, and her father is their ruler. Is it natural, under the circumstances, to jump at such a far-fetched conclusion as you have? Frankly, if I should proceed to kidnap the daughter of the ruler of even a semi-civilized state on any such flimsy ground as this,—or, for that matter, on any ground at all,—it strikes me I should be a very promising subject for a court-martial."

Vance was silent. It was impossible for him to blind himself to the common sense of the captain's views, and yet he was not prepared to yield to them.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "is there any objection to our requiring some sort of guarantee that no harm is intended to the girl?"

"Oh, certainly not, certainly not. By all means go at once to the old chief and politely ask him if he is going to cut his favorite daughter's throat and have her served up at lunch to the high-priest and his friends. Seriously, though, Mr. Vance, doesn't it occur to you that you are making something of a fool of yourself? Excuse me for expressing myself quite so plainly. I don't mean to cast any general reflection upon you, but only upon your action in this particular instance."

The captain rose and knocked the ashes from his cigar rather impatiently. Vance colored and rose also. He was angry and disappointed, and yet he could not but recognize the impregnability of his superior's position. It was evident that, unless he had something new to advance, the interview was over; and he fully realized that to disclose his true position would be simply to suggest to the other an apparent motive for his request, and that motive the desire to kidnap a young woman for entirely selfish reasons. Therefore he merely bowed as composedly as he could, and prepared to withdraw.

"I may as well say, too," continued the captain, as Vance stood with his hand upon the door, "that my orders and the delay occasioned by this storm make it necessary to get away from here as soon as possible. I expect to sail some time to-morrow afternoon, and our time would be altogether too short for any such investigation as you propose, even were it practicable or could it lead to any allowable interference."

"Do you mean to say," said Vance, warmly, "that if you knew my fears were justified you would still refuse to act?"

"I mean to say," replied French, "that, while I don't cross bridges until I reach them, I am inclined to think I could not see my way clear to interfering."

"And we sail to-morrow?"

"Such is my intention."

Lieutenant Vance went to his state-room. He threw himself down in his bunk and tried to think. At first all his ideas were con-

fused by the rapidity of their sequence, but gradually the situation began to shape itself in his mind.

That he was deeply in love, for the first time in his life, was the all-pervading thought. That the object of his love was exposed to serious danger of some vague and mysterious character, he was utterly unable to ignore, though he could not but admit that the tangible evidence would fit either of the captain's suppositions almost as well as his own. Still, he felt that he was right, and he had considerable confidence in his intuitions. Thirdly, he saw clearly that, whatever might be threatened, he could look for no help from any armed intervention on the part of his ship, and that even any intervention on his own part must be made effectual during the next twenty-four hours. Then the horrible consciousness of his utter helplessness in the face of an insupportable calamity came over him, and he writhed under the torture.

Suddenly he sat up. What was he thinking about? Had he admitted to himself for a moment the possibility of abandoning her? Let the ship go; he would remain and fight it out. Then followed another revulsion of feeling. To remain meant desertion, the worst disgrace that could befall a soldier, and, if captured, court-martial and probably death. Yes, but the disgrace of it! That was the real obstacle. Still, it was not like desertion in the face of an enemy. The ship and the service would get along just as well without him. There would be a scandal, and some good fellow, probably a more efficient officer than himself, would receive a well-earned promotion. A new idea flashed through his mind, and he sprang up joyfully. Certainly it was practicable. Even the disgrace need not be inevitable. No one but Dr. Deshon would be sure that he had deserted, and the doctor was his friend and would hold his tongue. Vance began pacing his narrow quarters. The thought of the helplessness of a man, alone and among a hostile nation, to contend against the danger he feared, hardly occurred to him. All he considered now was how to be able to throw himself into the scale, and he began to see a path to the accomplishment of this end. He pushed open the door of his stateroom and made his way to the quarter-deck. Captain French was still there alone, and Vance approached and saluted.

"May I ask, sir," he said, casually, "when you expect to go ashore again? I presume some such formality will have to be gone through with before sailing."

"I don't think it will be necessary for me to go in person," replied the captain. "I shall probably send you with a file of marines to make my excuses and farewells."

Vance struggled to control the expression of exultation which he felt rushing to his face.

"That is," continued French, "if you have gotten over your curious delusion and think you can refrain from embroiling us with these people."

The lieutenant smiled. He was too well pleased with the turn affairs had taken to resent any remarks that were not absolutely insulting.

"When shall I go, sir?" he asked.

"As early as possible in the morning," replied the other. "I shall weigh anchor at noon, or as soon as you can come aboard."

He turned aside to give some order, and Vance hurried back to his state-room and proceeded to lay his plans for the next day. First he took out and carefully examined his pistols, a very handsome brace of the newly invented Colt's revolvers, presented to him by Dr. Deshon. Then he packed away about his person as much ammunition as he could carry, and made a foray upon the steward's room, returning with a small bag of ship's biscuit. Finally, having filled his largest flask with brandy, he turned in for the night, and slept as sleeps a man whose mind is undisturbed by the petty problems and uncertainties that are always so much more annoying than the really great troubles we know to be inevitable.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### DESERTION.

THE morning dawned cloudy and threatening, but Vance appeared on deck at an early hour. A boat was promptly lowered and manned, and half a dozen marines tumbled aboard. Then the lieutenant, having received his parting instructions from Captain French, went over the side, and, bowing rather absently in reply to a last admonition to make as much haste as he found practicable, ordered the sailors to give way for the beach.

They were soon ashore, and, leaving the boat in charge of the blue-jackets, Vance and the marines commenced their march toward the city. It was not a long one. The way was unencumbered by the crowds of the previous day; the party was small, and moved quickly. Here and there they encountered one or more natives of the aboriginal race who were apparently early risers, but they had almost reached the gate before the country seemed entirely awake.

An audience with the Soveet was obtained, and Vance performed his duties in truly diplomatic fashion. He represented how that Captain French's orders made his early departure an unfortunate necessity, in view of the delays occasioned by the storm; he made the excuses of his commander for not bidding their host adieu in person, and ended with the customary expressions of good feeling, to which was added their gratification at having been the first of the outside world to come in contact with a people so intelligent and friendly as the Karanians.

The satisfaction and regrets of the Soveet followed in due form. Not a word was said on either side as to the interview of the preceding day; and at last, amid many mutual assurances of regard, final leave was taken, and the lieutenant and his men set out upon their return journey, attended by an escort of Karanian nobles.

They had nearly reached the beach. The probability of an accompanying escort and of the presence of a crowd of islanders curious to get a last look at the strangers had, oddly enough, not entered into

Vance's plans. However, there was no time to be lost. Suddenly he halted his party with an expression of deep annoyance, paced backward and forward several times, and finally, calling the sergeant of marines, gave him briefly to understand that he had neglected a matter which must be attended to before leaving. It would not, however, be necessary for all to go back; he would return alone, while the sergeant should lead the men on to the landing and wait for him there.

They parted, and Vance hurried back along the path.

It seemed as if no turn of the way would take him out of sight of groups of natives who were hastening to the shore, but at last the opportune moment came. For an instant he found himself free from the prying glances of curious eyes, and he grasped it to turn aside and plunge quickly into the thicket.

Fortunately, the undergrowth, while dense enough to conceal him, was yet not of a character to seriously impede a man's progress, and he pushed on as rapidly as due exercise of caution allowed. Now and again he halted and listened. The chattering of many voices had died away in the distance, and the gathering of the people along the path and at the landing, while it had impeded the inception of his escape, seemed now to be turned into a favorable element of the situation.

His idea had been to get as close as possible to that edge of the cover nearest the city,—a position whence he could best see what was going on with the least risk of being seen,—and then to work his way around until he reached the heights beyond. From that point his way would be comparatively clear to the great forest-clad mountain, among whose ravines a safe hiding-place might be readily found until search should be given up.

From the moment the plan occurred to him in his state-room, Vance had reasoned that the course he was now following would clear his name from the stigma of desertion. Captain French and Dr. Deshon might suspect him, but even Deshon could not be absolutely certain; while the mass of the ship's company, and his friends at home, would rest assured that he had either met with foul play from the natives or had wandered away and been lost in the wilderness of a strange region. So, reviewing the situation with some complacency, and smiling at the thought that he had not even had to lie to the sergeant of marines, he at last found himself in that part of the island which lay beyond and above the city. The sun was already well up, and as yet there was no sign of suspicion visible either along the shore or on the Falcon, which he could now make out riding easily at anchor, but showing the unmistakable signs of a man-of-war about to put to sea. With a parting glance he turned again and plunged farther westward into the ever-thickening depths of the forest.

During the earlier part of his flight frequent villas and cultivated clearings had rendered détours necessary, but now the farther he advanced the wilder and more unfrequented became his surroundings, until, at last, all signs of the presence of man disappeared.

While congratulating himself on this, and beginning for the first time to feel that his escape was made good, he came suddenly upon a small path, well kept, but so narrow as to admit the passage of but a single

man. It led straight on toward the mountain, and the fugitive, after a quick calculation to the effect that by following it he would travel more rapidly and easily and would leave less of a trail, made his determination accordingly. Then, too, he realized that a man moving carefully along a beaten track would make much less noise, and be thus more likely to detect the presence of another before he could be himself discovered.

He had not, however, gone far before an increasing light among the branches ahead warned him to be cautious, and a moment later he found himself peering out into a small circular clearing from which every tree and stump and bush had been scrupulously removed. The ground was covered with a growth of soft grass, cut close and showing every sign of constant care and attention.

All this was disturbing enough, but the building which stood in the centre of the area filled the fugitive with much more serious concern. It was an odd-looking structure, circular in shape, and, as he roughly calculated, about twenty feet in diameter and twenty in height. The material was an almost black stone, which seemed to be profusely ornamented with fantastic designs cut in bas-relief, conspicuous among which were semblances of jets of flame. No window, door, or aperture of any kind appeared upon the side nearest him, but a narrow winding stairway curled once around the entire circumference and led up to a gently sloping roof with a platform in the centre.

Despite the manifest imprudence of such an attempt, Vance felt himself irresistibly drawn to make some closer investigation of the building. Perhaps an undefined idea of its possible availability as a readily defensible stronghold lurked in a mind that had been devoted to the study of military matters; but all that he was conscious of was an overmastering interest and curiosity.

In pursuance of this impulse, he first carefully circled the clearing, under cover of the bushes, and satisfied himself that there was no break in the wall. Evidently the edifice was not intended as a place of residence. Then suddenly it flashed across his mind that it probably had some connection with the religion of the island: a temple, most likely; for it was built of the same material and ornamented with the same designs as the great temple that flanked the palace on the city square. Upon this supposition he reasoned that it was uninhabited; but, to make sure, he threw several small stones at the wall, in order to lead any possible occupant to disclose himself. In such event he trusted to the woods to conceal him.

No evidence of human presence, however, followed his demonstration, and, reassured, he hurried out into the clearing and proceeded to climb the stairs. In a moment he was upon the roof, which, he noticed, was also made of blocks of stone, sloping somewhat toward the raised platform in the centre, where yawned a circular orifice about two feet in diameter. Drawing himself cautiously up to this, Vance peered down into the dark interior. The odor of heavy perfumes came to him with an almost stifling strength. Gradually his eyes became accustomed to the blackness. He leaned further over, and at length began to be able to distinguish objects below.

The interior of the walls was decorated with fantastic flame pat-



terns tinted in red, yellow, and black, intricately combined and forming what seemed to him like weird faces looking up from the gloom. The floor was covered with carpets of skins. A richly canopied bed of some yellow metal, possibly gold, stood at one side, while tables, couches, and chairs of a similar material, elaborately chased, were scattered about. Richly embroidered hangings were suspended at several points, and a great fan, made from the feathers of some gorgeously plumaged bird, lay upon a sort of stand. He even thought he could distinguish several female garments thrown carelessly upon the couch. Way to descend among all this magnificence there was none. No interior stairway of any kind was visible, and it was quite evident that he who should be hardy enough to spring down would be caught like a rat in a trap.

Well, he had seen all he could see, and it was entirely incomprehensible. Now it was time to consult prudence and make up for his indiscretion by running no further risks. He rose and stood erect upon the roof. The dull boom of a distant cannon rolled up from the harbor, and then the sound of a musket discharged at regular intervals. Doubtless his companions were becoming alarmed at his stay. Perhaps they had learned that he had not reached the city, and, assuming him to be lost, were signalling to guide his return. In any case, it was beyond all question that a search would be promptly inaugurated.

Hurrying down the winding stair, Vance ran across the clearing in the direction of the mountain; but just before plunging again into the woods he observed that he crossed what seemed to be an artificial boundary line composed of two parallel rows of black and white stones laid close together, the black forming the row nearer the ascent, the white the row nearer the open country adjoining the city. Then he found himself once more surrounded by the dense shadows of the woods, where the blood ceased to bound in his pulses at every discharge of the signal guns that boomed now and again from the shore.

Gradually, as he pressed on, the ascent became steeper; the trees were sparser and more dwarfed; bare ledges of lava-like rock began to appear, from several of which he could see over the forest to where the Falcon still swung at anchor. From one point he even made out two boats rowing toward the shore. Captain French evidently would not get away that day, and Vance found himself almost smiling as he pictured the wrath of his commander.

At that moment a faint groan came to his ears.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### LIRRI.

THE fugitive started at the sound, and listened intently. In a few moments he heard it repeated, and then an unmistakable though faint cry for help, as if muffled by distance, weakness, or some intervening obstacles,

For an instant he hesitated. Hitherto he had had no opportunity to think much, and his plans had looked only to escaping from the ship, without any definite idea as to how his solitary presence could avail to ward off from the princess the vague dangers which he imagined encompassed her. Now it was necessary, above all, that no false step should be taken; and he fully realized that the disclosure to any one of his presence on the mountain might be fraught with serious consequences.

Again the cry was repeated, more feebly than before, and Vance found that he had not the heart to be politic in such an emergency. Some one was evidently in serious trouble: be the results what they might, he must afford what aid he could.

Fixed in this resolve, but not venturing to return the call, he began to pick his way cautiously in the direction whence the cries had come. After a few steps he halted in order to get new bearings,—fortunately enough, as the event proved, for at that moment another groan seemed to rise from directly beneath his feet.

He felt the blood leap to his heart. Then he composed his startled nerves, and, parting the bushes, prepared to move forward again.

His first step solved the mystery. He found himself looking down into a narrow, deep gully, apparently the bed of some dry stream, and realizing how little less than providential it was that he had not been pushing rapidly forward as before, in which event nothing could have saved him from falling into the snare and being plunged down the steep declivity to some such fate as he at once assumed must have befallen the unfortunate whose voice had guided him thither.

Peering over the edge, Vance at last made out the figure of a man seated with his back against a large boulder. At the same moment the other, roused by the rustle of the leaves above, looked up, revealing, as he did so, the shaven head and dark face of one of the island priesthood. The red tunic and black cloak were there also, but the flame-tipped fillet was gone,—probably dashed from his brow by the fall.

An exclamation of joy from the Karanian dispelled at once the feeling of aversion which had for the moment prompted the American to almost regret his humanity. Pushing the bushes aside, he clambered carefully down the decline and stood over the half-prostrate figure.

"What is the matter, my friend?" he asked.

"I am Lirrhi the priest. I fell. I did not see the ravine," was the reply; "and I am hurt here and here." He indicated his left arm and side.

Vance knelt down at once and began to strip off the torn tunic. A hasty examination made it evident that an arm and at least one rib were broken.

During this examination the priest eyed him with a curiosity which seemed more potent than the pain of his injuries, but he asked no question. Vance, too, had now an opportunity to observe the patient closely. He found him to be not more than thirty-five years of age, tall and powerfully built, and with a face in which the unpleasant characteristics he had noted as prevailing among his caste were entirely

lacking. The man would have been called handsome anywhere, with his broad forehead, straight nose, and black piercing eyes.

"Well," said the lieutenant, as he finished his examination, "the first thing to do is to get you out of this hole. I suppose you can't help yourself very much?"

"I have tried to climb out. Once I fainted from pain," was the reply.

Vance proceeded to busy himself about his task. He tore the priest's robe into strips and constructed a sort of sling, which he passed under the armpits of the injured man in such a way as not to strain or bind upon his hurts. Then, running the other end of the improvised rope around a sapling growing upon the edge of the gully, he grasped it tightly in one hand, and, lifting the Karanian in his arms, began the hazardous ascent. Once or twice he slipped and the man groaned faintly, but Vance held fast to the strip of rope, and, balancing his own weight upon the other end, saved both from rolling back down the decline, until at last, half climbing and half drawing his burden up, he reached the top. The priest had fainted again from pain and exertion, but a few drops from the lieutenant's flask seemed to revive him, and the latter at once set himself to bind up his patient's hurts as well as was practicable, tearing his shirt for the bandages and cutting rough splints from the neighboring bushes.

After three-quarters of an hour's hard work, the amateur surgeon surveyed the result with considerable self-satisfaction. The broken rib appeared to be well in place and so supported as to be likely to remain so; while the arm, only one of the small bones of which happened to be fractured, was set and splinted in so masterly a way that he found himself wishing that Deshon were there to admire his handi-craft.

By this time night was rapidly approaching, and Vance began to vex himself with the serious problem of how to dispose of his charge satisfactorily without imperilling his own safety or the success of the plans he must soon form. The man had as yet said very little. His mind seemed to be absorbed in some line of thought from which terror was not altogether absent. Still, Vance reasoned that gratitude must mean something even with these fellows, and he determined to tell enough of his predicament to find out whether the other could suggest any mutually safe expedient.

Acting upon this resolve, he related in a few words how he had deserted from his ship and how he was undoubtedly being sought for and must on no account allow himself to be taken. Of his motives he thought it best to say nothing.

The priest listened without interruption, and, when Vance had finished, said,—

"I now understand why you dared venture upon the sacred land of Tao. It is certain that none of our people will pursue you here, nor will they allow your countrymen to commit such a sacrilege."

Vance stared at the speaker in astonishment, not unmingled with a satisfaction at the apparent assurance of at least temporary safety which the words conveyed; but Lirri proceeded to follow them up

with an earnest appeal that the stranger would complete his good offices by assisting him to reach the foot of the mountain.

"There is a house," he continued, "not far from the boundary of black and white stones, where we can spend the night and find food. My brothers use it when they come to speak with Tao."

"But you are asking me," exclaimed Vance, "to leave the mountain, where you have just admitted that no one can follow me. Here at least I am safe. In your hut I might be captured at any moment."

The face of the priest grew ashy, and there was a gleam of terror in his eyes. He seized Vance's hand.

"You must aid me to go away," he said. "If I should die here! If I should be found here thus! Do not fear to go. Fear rather to stay. I cannot tell you why; but trust yourself to me, who owe you more than my life." In an agony of agitation, he struggled to his feet, as if to make the attempt alone in case his rescuer should refuse to aid his descent.

"Well," thought Vance, "I suppose the place that's safe for me is just the one that isn't safe for you, and *vice versa*." A few moments of reflection, however, convinced him that it was wise as well as humane to comply with the other's wishes, and, if possible, bind him closer to his interests, even at the price of taking some risks. Such an ally might prove invaluable, and, in any event, it would never do to lose track of the man before satisfying himself on some points upon which his future plans must depend.

"Come, then," he said, passing his arm around Lirrhi so as to support his weight. "I will trust you. Tell me how to go."

For answer the priest carried the hand, which he still held, to his forehead, in token apparently of gratitude, and then, assisted by the fugitive, commenced the descent.

Their progress was necessarily slow, for the greatest care was required to avoid displacing the bandages or the set bones. Then, too, the forest was very dark, and nothing but the rays of the full moon made it possible for them to overcome in safety the many obstacles that beset their path. At last the ground became level, the lines of a low building loomed up before them, and the next moment Vance perceived that they were crossing the same boundary line of black and white stones which he had observed near the circular temple. It flashed across him that this must be designed to separate from the surrounding country the sacred ground to which the priest had alluded; and he greeted the surmise with a satisfaction which saw in it a piece of possibly very valuable knowledge, to be utilized in such future emergencies as might arise.

They now entered the house, which proved to be a low structure of black stone, fitted up with considerable regard for comfort and well provisioned with dried fruits and such other edibles as readily admitted of preservation. From the moment of crossing the boundary a marked change had come over Lirrhi's demeanor. He seemed like a man relieved suddenly from some absorbing terror that had hampered both his speech and his thoughts. Slipping from Vance's arm and throwing himself at his benefactor's feet, he seized the American's hand. His

former preoccupied silence was broken, and he now poured forth expressions of gratitude so profuse that they began to seem to their recipient entirely out of proportion to even the service he had rendered.

"Do you, who have saved more than my life," he cried, "take its ordering to yourself. I am your slave, with all that you have saved to me." And again he pressed Vance's hand to his forehead.

The latter concluded to utilize so favorable a moment for the obtaining of information. "Doubtless you would have been found by some one else," he suggested, "had I not happened to pass."

The priest shook his head. "I had been there for one night," he replied. "No one but a priest dare venture upon the mountain; and he whom Tao had snared could look for no aid from such. Had I died?" He put his hand to his face and shuddered.

"I suppose it would have been rather unpleasant," said Vance.

"Do you not know," pursued the other, quickly, grasping the lieutenant's wrist, "that, had my breathless body polluted the holy precincts but for a single moment, Tao would have consumed both it and my spirit in his fires? Our laws even order him who may be hurt there and yet escape, to be slain outright and thrown to the god, that he be not cheated of a feast he has prepared for. Should Aroo guess the truth, then, I were still lost; for he hates and fears me because my father, whom he slew, was once his rival for the office of high-priest."

Vance looked curiously at the man. Evidently he was not acting. His emotion was too real.

"You tell me," he said, "that all I have saved is mine, and you say I have saved your spirit from torture. Should I ask you to go upon the mountain and kill yourself—what then?"

The priest trembled, but he answered, firmly,—

"I would go. Both my life and my spirit's life were lost. You have found them and lent them to me. How should I refuse to repay the loan?"

Vance said nothing, but helped his patient to one of the couches, propped him up in as comfortable a position as possible, and began to investigate the larder. Hitherto action and anxiety had kept him from realizing his wants, but now hunger asserted itself very forcibly. His companion, too, he felt must be in need of food after a fast of twenty-four hours. Fruits and a stone vessel containing some of the thick, sweet wine he had tasted at the banquet were soon procured, and they proceeded to eat and drink, Lirrhi sparingly, Vance with all the hunger of a healthy man who had been drawing heavily on his nerves all day.

While thus employed, the American's mind was busy with several ideas. What could he lose by making a confidant of this islander whom he had befriended and whom Aroo had injured so deeply? Surely nothing; and, while, of course, the possible gain could only be conjectured, he would at least be apt to learn something definite about the mysterious influences that opposed him. Quickly taking his resolution, he turned to the priest, and, without any circumlocution or concealment, related to him, in as few words as possible, all that had happened, with the sole exception of his interview with the Soveet's

daughter. He told of his feelings upon seeing her at the banquet, his determination to win her, his interview with the Sovereign and the high-priest, his deep impression that something lay behind their refusal which seriously menaced the girl herself, and his final determination to remain and either save her or share her fate.

His hearer listened attentively to this narrative of hopes, fears, and vague determination. When Vance had finished, he remained silent for several minutes. The American's brow clouded with impatience.

"What would you that I should say?" asked Lirrhi, mildly, as he noted the other's mood.

"The truth," cried Vance.

"Then, my friend, I beg of you to put this wish forever from your thoughts. It is hopeless,—as hopeless as that you should compel the mountain of Tao to discharge its molten fire under the sea."

But Vance was now in no humor to be satisfied with vague figures of speech. He went on in a tone which left no doubt of his set resolve to know all, and at once.

"You say that you are indebted to me,—that you are my friend and Aroo's enemy. If you speak truly, then tell me exactly why I must put hope aside. If the reason appears to me good, I may follow your advice."

Lirrhi seemed deeply agitated. At last he fixed his eyes sadly upon his benefactor and replied, "The Princess Zekah is consecrated to a higher fate than mortal nuptials."

Vance felt his blood chill, more at the manner than at the words.

"Go on. Explain; tell me all," he cried. "I have heard that much before."

"It is a long story—if you are to understand it," said the priest, hesitatingly.

"Tell it, if it be from the beginning of the world," was the reply; and Lirrhi, the priest of Tao, began his tale, as follows:

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## CHAPTER IX.

### TAO.

"MANY years ago, the god Tao was possessed of all the earth, and pervaded it in every part, so that in time he became the earth itself, devouring again and again the increase of flesh and corn and fruit and herbs and wood, that sprang from his own bosom fresh from each devouring.

"At last, however, Tao determined that he would no longer consume all things that grew, but that he would create man to be his friend and servant and worshipper, and endow him with the fruits of the earth, whereby he should live out his days.

"In order that this might be, the god sought out a special spot where he might dwell, instead of pervading all things; wherefore he selected the great mountain upon the island of Karana which was then known by another name,—a name that no man may now speak and live.



This spot he chose because the people whom he had created and placed here proved to be the most faithful and devout of all the many peoples he had created ; and he knew that among them he need dread no interference with the land which he had reserved to himself when he gave all the rest to man.

"So Tao was an earth-god, and the animals wandered and the trees grew upon his bosom, and died and were devoured by him and grew thence again, and the people dwelt upon the plains, and worshipped him, and slew animals upon his breast that their blood might sink down and nourish him the more bounteously ; and Tao, in return for these things, watched over the people day and night and protected them.

"At last there came a day of new fortunes. One morning, when our fathers went down to the ocean, they saw a great canoe advancing toward the shore, with a great square sail and a horse's head at the prow, and three tiers of long oars that churned all the sea into white foam. And men and women and children with fair faces issued from the ship and descended upon the beach ; and the men wore bright metal upon their heads and bodies, and their beards were black and bushy, and their noses were curved like the beaks of eagles.

"Then did my people greet the strangers kindly and give them land whereupon to live and build houses, and the men from the sea built the city and called it Karana ; and they were learned in many arts of which the islanders knew nothing, and introduced much wealth and many strange customs, and taught the people of the land, who learned gladly of them and gave them due reverence and, later, power ; until, at last, the strangers came to rule over the island, and chose, at first two, and afterward one of their number, whom they called soveets, and who, with the help of a council of elders, governed both races and made laws.

"At first, as you may imagine, they were kindly and beneficent and dealt fairly with us, but when their numbers and power increased we fell more and more under subjection, and they became lords of the island and we their servants,—little better than their slaves.

"And yet, through all, they did not interfere with the worship of Tao, but rather yielded obedience to him. Had they done differently, they would have been thrown back into the sea, despite their brass armor and sharp swords ; for the people of the old race outnumbered the new a thousandfold, and still outnumber them many times, even after all these generations ; and they would abide no failure of the worship of him who had fed and watched over them from the beginning of the years. So the strangers, seeing this, and being determined to rule, gave up one by one their own gods whom they had left behind them over the sea, and worshipped Tao with us, and established a priesthood of our own race, that we might seek advancement so, and not trouble ourselves about the government.

"It was not long, however, before many disputes arose between the priests of Tao and the descendants of the strangers, the priests setting up their word in many matters which the others would not permit, and all the people were divided ; for the strangers also wor-

shipped our god, and many of us were beholden to them for much, so that, strive as they might, the priests could not attain the power they wished nor compel all the people of their blood to support them to all lengths against the soveets. Thereupon they did not love the soveets, but were anxious to humiliate them whenever the opportunity should be given.

"And now, while affairs stood thus, a strange thing happened. The mountain, where dwelt the god Tao, began suddenly to belch forth fire and smoke and streams of molten rock, that flowed over the level ground and destroyed crops and houses and killed men and animals far and near, until a great terror came on the land. One of the soveets who then ruled was a proud man, and the high-priest had opposed him in vain and lost even much of the power that his predecessors had, for the soveet was cunning and won our own people away from his rival; and the high-priest hated the soveet. So, when the throat of Tao began to spread destruction through the island, the high-priest proclaimed everywhere that the god was angry because of injuries done to the power and dignity of his children, the priests, in that they were subject to strangers; and all of his race, being very much in fear lest the island might be consumed away, believed what the high-priest said, for he was known to be a man of great piety and learning and well taught even in all the arts of the men from the sea.

"So at last all of the old blood gathered together and beset the soveets, and threatened to kill them and all their people unless they so dealt with the priests as to take away the wrath of Tao; and they besieged the soveets in their city until they and their followers had no food to eat. Then these came to terms, and ratified the terms with oaths, and they and their council placed their children in the hands of the priests as hostages that they would make such reparation even as Tao might demand; only the head soveet warned the high-priest, in the hearing of all the people, that if he and his did what the other commanded, then the curse of fire must be lifted, or the high-priest should stand forth and suffer punishment as an impostor who presumed to speak the words of a god who spoke not to him. This condition also the people compelled the priests to accept and to ratify with oaths.

"Thereupon the high-priest took fifty of his followers and withdrew with them up into the mountain, leaving orders that no man should presume to follow; as, in fact, none were likely to do, with the streams of burning mud pouring down through the channels they had furrowed out and threatening to spread over and consume all. For a hundred days did the high-priest and those with him remain hidden, being seen by no man for the taboo which was set upon the mountain.

"After they had been there one hundred days, suddenly the flames ceased to come forth for a whole day, and the people began to give thanks; but soon they saw that they were not yet safe, for Tao seemed to grow more angry than ever; and then the priests descended the mountain and came to the city and sought the soveets; and the high-priest spoke, saying that Tao had commanded, first, that the priests should be held equal in power and honor to the well-born, as the men

from the sea were called; and, second, that there should be but one soveet, who should rule with the high-priest; and, third, that it was Tao's pleasure that this soveet should give the most beautiful of his daughters to be the god's wife.

"As you may imagine, the head soveet, being he who should remain in power, exclaimed loudly against such a penance, but the high-priest smiled and said it was no penance, but that the maid, in so dying, would bring high honor to herself and her father and his people.

"Again the soveet cried out that this was the work, not of the god, but of the high-priest, who hated him and sought thus to be avenged; but the other smiled once more, and reminded him that if the soveet spoke truth and no good came of the sacrifice the high-priest's head must answer for his deception. At these words, all of the old race, with many of the soveet's blood who saw no peril to themselves in this atonement, cried out that the high-priest spoke fairly, and that the life of a single virgin was a small matter compared with the safety of all the people.

"So the soveet was compelled to yield, and he gave his daughter over to the high-priest, who had already built the circular house which lies at the foot of the mountain to be a nuptial chamber of the god; and they lowered the maiden through the orifice in the roof, and, with her, provisions for three days, and left her there, that the god might view her and take her to his bosom in such season as he willed; and they set a guard of thirty priests around the house.

"The three days passed, and the maiden cried out with hunger, and the soveet, her father, who was in great trouble, besought the high-priest that she might be slain outright and thus offered up to the god; but the high-priest smiled, and replied that no blemish of a violent death must be upon the body of the virgin bride of Tao. So the soveet could gain nothing, and the cries of the girl grew fainter, until they could be heard no more.

"Then everything happened as the high-priest had foretold; for Tao, being thus appeased, ceased suddenly to devastate the country with his burning breath, and withdrew beneath the mountain to find solace with the spirit of the bride that had been offered to him.

"And the people gave thanks to the god, and, under him, to the soveet who had given his daughter to save them; but above all they honored the wise high-priest who had learned the will of Tao.

"For a time it was noticed that that part of the ocean that lay beyond the mountain boiled and was much troubled; but at last it too became quiet, and all the fears passed away.

"So it happened that there remained but one soveet, who ruled together with the high-priest, and this has been so ever since. The priests are in all respects equal to the well-born, but the high-priest, by the help of Tao, is greater than the soveet; for whenever it has happened that the latter has been slow to govern as the former willed, then the god grows angry and belches up flame and smoke and molten rocks, until the soveet's daughter, clad in her richest robes, is taken in solemn pageant to the house by the mountain and left there to become the wife of Tao."

Vance had listened to this strange story of superstition and barbarity with feelings he could hardly describe. His anger, his abhorrence, were too deep for words, and he was astonished at his own calmness.

"Do you mean, then, to tell me," he said, slowly, as Lirrhi finished speaking, "that Zekah, the daughter of your present Soveet, is reserved for such a fate as this?"

"She is his only daughter," replied the priest; "and were she wedded and taken away there would be no one to appease Tao should his wrath break forth. No; even should Aroo, the high-priest, consent, the people would not permit it, nor the Soveet dare as much. He could not count upon the support of his own blood in such a quarrel."

"Well," said Vance, with that almost flippant composure which seems to come over an American when he feels most deeply, "all I've got to say is that there will be a decided hitch in the arrangements if your priests attempt any such business while I'm alive and here."

Unconsciously he had spoken in English, but Lirrhi seemed to catch the drift of the thought, and shook his head.

"You will fail," he said, "and you will die. You may even hasten her death, should Aroo suspect your designs."

"He does," said Vance, shortly.

The priest made no reply; and a few moments later he seemed to have fallen asleep, exhausted by pain, privations, and fatigue.

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## CHAPTER X.

### NHAR.

VANCE threw himself down upon a couch and endeavored to sleep, but the horror of all that he now knew seemed to grow momentarily more present to him. Gradually he began to realize what it meant, and to measure his own helplessness. What could he accomplish but his own death in addition to that of the princess? Under the spell of such thoughts, it would have been strange had even exhaustion closed his eyelids.

So the night dragged along. At last the blackness commenced to shade into gray. He could make out the form of his companion extended upon the other couch. The priest's face was turned toward him; and, as the light increased, Vance became conscious that the black eyes had been open for some time and were regarding him closely.

A fancy flashed across his mind that this might be the set glare of death; but no, there was a look of deep concern on the face, and with it an expression such as a man wears when conflicting thoughts are warring in his brain. As for himself, he felt that his own appearance must be sufficiently haggard and drawn to excite the sympathy of even his enemies.

Lirrhi at last broke the silence.

"Tell me," he said, "are you still resolved to destroy yourself, now that you have slept and are rested? Perhaps the gods that speak in sleep have taught you wisdom?"

"I have not slept," said Vance, very quietly; "but my purpose is not likely to change."

The manner and tone seemed to carry a conviction stronger than any violent words. The priest felt it. His brow contracted still more, and he turned his face toward the wall. Then, in a few moments, he again bent his eyes upon the lieutenant, and there was a look of set resolve in them.

"Listen," he said. "You have determined. I, too, have thought and determined. I will help you in return for what you have done for me, and for hatred of my father's slayer."

Vance sprang up and grasped the hand of the weaker. Then his face clouded again.

"What can you do more than I, my poor friend? You will only involve yourself in my destruction," he said, hopelessly.

Lirrh's eyes flashed.

"What then?" he replied. "Have not you saved me from death and more? Is not my life still in your hands? It may happen that, with my aid, there will be new chances to favor you of which you cannot dream. There is danger for both of us, and we may fail; but there may also be hope. No, do not question me," he continued, as the American's face gleamed with eagerness. "I make that a condition, that you shall do my bidding and ask no questions. Shall it be so?"

Such a proposition was not one to be weighed for a moment by a desperate man. Having no plan himself nor the prospect of any, surely he surrendered nothing in agreeing to adopt the plan of a person who had one. Besides, if it failed, he could still cut loose and make his own fight. Therefore Vance did not waste time in reflection.

"I accept," he said; "and I will obey you without question, so long as there is a chance of success. I only reserve the right to fight in my own way if—if—" he hesitated, and then went on rather desperately—"should the princess be threatened with any immediate danger."

"Very well," resumed the priest, ignoring the other's reservation. "I perceive that you are a wise man. Now attend. There is one who will be here soon and who will guide you to a place of safety, where you must remain until I send for you. Hark! Surely that is his step now."

Vance listened anxiously, and soon even his duller ears caught the sound of a soft footfall. In a moment the door was pushed gently open, and a pair of bright bead-like eyes peered in. Their owner was a boy of apparently about fourteen years, with a slender, graceful figure, and dark-skinned like the native race. He started back in alarm when he descried the American.

"Do not fear, Nhar," said Lirrh, raising himself upon the couch.

At these words the boy came forward again, glancing with an expression of solicitous inquiry toward where the priest lay. He made an obeisance, but said nothing.

"I have been hurt, Nhar," continued Lirrh, "and this man has saved me—perhaps from death. I wish, therefore, that he be taken to a place of safety from those that search for him, and concealed and



cared for, and that you speak of his presence to no one,—not even to Aroo himself. You know the cave upon the breast of Tao?"

The boy nodded, shuddering slightly.

"That will be safe. Are the stranger's people doing aught? Tell me what has happened."

Thus questioned, Nhar broke silence for the first time, speaking eagerly and with eyes full of wonder:

"Yes; their leader went to the Soveet and seemed by signs to accuse him of making away with the man, and there were violent gestures, and the leader of the strangers has sent forth many armed bands into the woods to search; but the Soveet forbade that they be suffered to set foot upon the mountain, though they might threaten to destroy the town and kill every one; but nothing has come of it yet; and the high-priest has ordered his followers to surround Tao and permit no one to enter there——"

"Then you must be quick," interrupted Lirrhi. "Take him to the cave. See that he be supplied with food and drink, cover the entrance with boughs, and come back to me."

Vance was not loath, in view of the news he had heard, to return to the precincts which he had come to regard as a city of refuge; and, bidding Lirrhi a hasty farewell, with a parting word to the effect that he relied upon his promise of aid, the fugitive resigned himself to the pilotage of his young guide.

They started out at once, the boy leading the way along a new path, but resisting every effort of the American to draw him into conversation or to learn more about the condition of affairs at the city and the shore. He seemed to have construed Lirrhi's command of silence in its broadest sense. Soon they crossed the boundary of black and white stones and commenced the ascent, circling the mountain gradually toward the south, as if to place its peak between them and the landing.

Finally, when they had reached a point about two-thirds of the way up the western slope, from which the city was not visible, Nhar stopped suddenly and began to go carefully over the ground, like a hound looking for a lost scent. Then he climbed a few steps higher, and, bending down, put aside the boughs of a small tree, disclosing, as he did so, a narrow opening. Motioning Vance to hold the branches back, he stepped within, and, taking a lamp from a niche in the rock, lighted it. They found themselves in a medium-sized chamber hewn out of the stone and provided with a couch and such simple furniture and fittings as would suffice to make an inmate reasonably comfortable. Dried fruit, bread, and smoked meat stocked a larder at least as luxurious as that of the house where they had left Lirrhi.

Then, for the first time since they had started, Nhar spoke.

"Stay here," he said, "until I come. No one will find you. There is food enough for several days, and Lirrhi will take care of you."

Before Vance could reply with thanks, much less attempt to take advantage of this sudden communicativeness, the boy had left him and was bounding away down the mountain. When he had disappeared, the fugitive re-entered his place of refuge and proceeded to make himself as fully at home as circumstances would permit.



The two days that followed were dreary enough. There was absolutely nothing he could do; nothing to read; nothing even to think of, for his affairs had been taken so entirely out of his own hands that he felt himself a mere puppet to be moved when some controlling power pulled the strings. And yet, whenever his mind revolted against these conditions, it was only to find himself confronted with the alternative of attempting to carry Zekah away by his own unaided force, against at least several thousand swords,—and to carry her whither? It was preposterous. Simple suicide would be much more sensible. This was the conclusion upon which he was driven a hundred times as the days passed.

At last, when the mental agony of his position was becoming absolutely unbearable, and the third day was almost gone, Vance started from the couch on which he was reclining, to see Nhar brush aside the concealing foliage and step down into the cave. Experience had, however, taught the American that it was useless to try to force this strangely reticent boy with questions, so he simply waited for him to speak of his own accord.

"Your people have gone away," said Nhar, at last, after he had carefully inspected everything in the apartment, including its occupant.

At first Vance hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. The news, of course, freed him from his most immediate peril and removed the first obstacle from his path; and yet the sensation of absolute loneliness that came over him—the consciousness that he was now but a single stranger amid a hostile race—drove the feeling of satisfaction from his mind.

Nhar watched his face curiously for a while. Then he continued,—  
"Lirrhi is waiting for you below. Let us go down to him."

Mechanically Vance rose to his feet, and, following the boy out of the cave, commenced the descent of the mountain. As he turned the cliff fronting the harbor, he imagined he saw far down upon the horizon the glint of a white sail in the sunset. Yes, he was now truly alone.

As they drew near to the house where he had left the priest, they saw a covered litter resting at the entrance and four sturdy fellows lounging against the wall. A hand from within thrust aside the curtains and beckoned Vance to approach. The black eyes of Lirrhi peered out at him, and the priest's finger was at his lips. The lieutenant bent down.

"You are better?" he said. "Your hurts are healing?"

"Yes; much better,—nearly well, I think," replied the other, hurriedly; "but a word with you before the bearers come near. Say nothing of your or my whereabouts for these days; above all, say nothing of the mountain, or of how I received my injury. Leave everything to me. You strayed away and were lost—do you understand? It is necessary. The Soveet was rudely used by your people, and he must never know that you remained willingly. He may suspect. He may think you a fool. So much the better. But should Aroo dream the truth, we are both dead men. Say as little as you can."

The American nodded, to indicate that he understood the warnings. The bearers came forward, and, raising the litter upon their shoulders, commenced the journey to the city. Vance and Nhar walked on either side, or, where the path became too narrow, behind, but no further words were spoken, and no sound broke the stillness save the dull monotonous croon to which the litter-men timed their steps.

It was dark when they entered the gate, a circumstance which it flashed across Vance's mind had probably been planned for by Lirrhi, and which tended to inspire a confidence in the prudence of his ally.

It soon appeared, however, that all measures to conceal his presence had been vain, for scarcely had they reached a small house in one of the side streets and, carrying the priest within, laid him on a bed, when a thundering of staves sounded upon the door.

Vance started to his feet and began to examine his revolvers, but Lirrhi signed to him that he should do nothing rash, and ordered Nhar to attend the summons.

A dozen men carrying torches and a litter were disclosed without, and Vance's astonishment was unbounded to see the Soveet himself part the curtains of the latter and step down.

After giving some command to his attendants, the prince advanced to the door, entered hastily, and closed it behind him. Then he looked thoughtfully from one to the other of the inmates,—Lirrhi upon the couch, and Vance and Nhar seated near its foot. At last he spoke.

"I found it difficult to believe the word brought me, that you had returned here," he said, slowly. "Therefore I came myself to make sure."

No one answered. After a pause, he continued,—

"Your course has resulted in grave trouble to me and my people. I have been accused of killing you or of imprisoning you,—I know not which; but your master was pleased to make all the threats that signs could carry, unless I produced you. His men and mine searched earnestly, except upon the sacred mountain, and there was well-nigh war when we would not suffer that he should search there also."

The Soveet cast an inquiring glance at the American, as if expecting some reply, but Lirrhi hastened to forestall his words.

"The stranger is under the protection of Tao himself," he said. "He was honored by the god in being selected to save me, his priest, perhaps from death."

The Soveet started in surprise, and Lirrhi continued,—

"You may well believe, then, that Tao should protect him from all pursuers and wheresoever he might best do so. That protection must be assured to him henceforth."

The Soveet played thoughtfully with a little gold dagger with a wavy blade that hung at his girdle.

"It is my wish," he said, at last, "to protect him as far as my power extends, despite the fact that he has so borne himself as to bring evil upon me and mine. That also is why I came here myself upon learning of his arrival. There is a house on the square near my own, which I shall assign for his residence, and it is well that he should be established there to-night."

Vance glanced toward Lirrho, but the latter merely bowed his acquiescence with impassive face.

"It is best, too, that you should come at once," resumed Merrak, and he turned as if to lead the way.

The priest leaned forward and spoke to Vance hurriedly and in a low tone:

"He is right. It is impossible for you to stay here without destroying my power to help you. I have been much troubled to know what to do, but the Soveet has solved the problem wisely. I am persuaded that he wishes you well. Go with him quickly. You are safe for the present, but do nothing till you hear from me."

Their august visitor had reached the door: now he glanced back impatiently. In a moment Vance was at his side, and they stepped out into the deserted street. It was evident that the torch- and litter-bearers had been ordered not to wait, and for a few minutes the two men walked on in silence. The night was very black, but Vance imagined that he saw the shadows of dark faces and the gleam of serpentine blades at every corner. Time and again his hand sought, half unconsciously, the butt of one of his pistols, till the touch restored his courage. He breathed a heart-felt sigh of relief as they issued at last from gloomy alleys and tombstone-like buildings into the open square. Reaching the door of a small house facing eastward, his guide opened it and entered. A lamp burned upon a table, showing an ante-room connected by a passage with what appeared to be a bedroom beyond. The furniture was simple and the fittings plain, but everything promised a considerable degree of comfort. Having inspected the place carefully, Merrak turned to take his leave, and, after a moment's hesitation, said,—

"I wish you to understand that the protection which I now extend to you is upon one condition. You must surrender at once and forever your impossible hopes. You must never even see my daughter. I do not know what evil your actions may have already brought upon her and my house, but I fear much. That Aroo suspects and watches you I am sure, and it would be strange did he not. A suspicion is generally enough for one of his kind, and I dread him most when he refrains from striking."

For reply, Vance drew the Soveet back from the door, and then, looking him straight in the eyes, said,—

"Why will you not join with me in destroying this vermin of a priesthood? It is cowardly to fear and yield to them as you do."

Merrak seemed strangely agitated. He put up his hands, as if to ward off the other's words.

"No, no; you do not understand," he said, speaking rapidly and in low tones. "They are all-powerful with the people,—even mine. I am nothing: the god—"

Vance could not suppress the look of contempt that crossed his face, but fortunately the dim light concealed it. He felt that to tell the weak man before him that he was fully acquainted with all the dangers he feared would be only to betray his friend.

"As you please," he said, shortly. "But *my* people are not accustomed to yield so readily. As for myself, I promise nothing."

"Then you will die, and she that you love with you. Aroo is cruel, and Lirrho cannot save you even if he would. Be warned."

Vance almost imagined for a moment that the old man was about to throw himself at his feet; but he rallied his dignity and stepped to the door, turning once again, before he disappeared in the darkness, to say, in tones so pleading as to be absolutely pitiful,—

"It is one who would be your friend that says it. Be warned."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### FACE TO FACE.

As soon as the sound of the Soveet's footsteps had died away, Vance turned from the door, after first closing it and sliding home the bolts with which it was well provided. Then, taking up the lamp, he proceeded to examine carefully his new residence,—or prison,—with a view to estimating its defensive capabilities in case of an attack.

His survey was entirely satisfactory. There was nothing that could be set fire to. A few narrow windows, or rather ventilators, opened just beneath the roof, but it was quite evident that they were much too small to admit the body of a man, or even of successful archery practice by enemies from without. The door, then, was the only point to be guarded, and he looked to his revolvers with a serene confidence in their power to make good that position. Even if compelled to depend upon his sword, he reasoned that nothing but a concerted rush on the part of men the foremost of whom were prepared to sacrifice themselves could prove of any avail; and still there would always be an opportunity to fall back into the inner room and defend the passage leading to it.

After all, however, there seemed to be but little reason to anticipate siege or assault, and, his examination completed and plan of defence formed, Vance placed his sword and pistols within easy reach and threw himself down upon the couch.

Weariness and vigorous health had begun to do their work, and he had almost yielded to the powers that induce slumber, when his senses, naturally acute, were aroused to their full activity by a sound that came to him from without,—the quick tread of a sandalled foot upon the pavement.

In a moment he was up and listening intently, pistol in hand.

The steps came nearer, but the lieutenant was on the point of laughing at his sleepy imagination for transforming a belated wayfarer into a midnight assassin, when they stopped abruptly before his door. Then followed a moment of apparent hesitation on the part of the new-comer and of sharp tension on that of the waiting garrison.

Several times during his life Vance had noted that, however much he might bemoan his tendency to seem irresolute in trifling emergencies, yet whenever the call upon his courage and decision was definite and

peremptory his nerves responded promptly and became firm as steel. In fact, he even imagined that he could think more clearly and appear and be cooler and more collected on such occasions than could most of the men whom he envied for their readiness of speech and action when nothing but ready speech or tactful action was required.

In the present situation, and while he waited for the next development, it occurred to him that the danger of using his pistol in dealing with a single adversary would be much greater than that of taking his chances in a hand-to-hand encounter. Therefore he slipped the revolver into his belt again and cautiously drew his sword.

Meanwhile, the stranger, whoever he might be, had evidently decided upon his own course, and, advancing boldly, struck two sharp blows on the door.

"Who are you?" asked Vance, with a promptness which must have surprised his visitor somewhat.

"Hush! do not speak so loudly," said the other, earnestly. "Can you not open your door to me?"

Something in the man's voice struck the American as familiar, and yet he found himself unable to place it.

"I can open my door to you if I want to," replied he, in lower tones; "but before I do so you must pardon me if I ask again who you are and what you desire."

"You are very cautious." There was a sneering emphasis on the words which served at once to refresh Vance's memory.

"Aha! my medical and priestly friend! So it's you, is it?" he thought. "I don't believe I am suffering from any special anxiety for a *tête-à-tête*."

"I am Mapo, and I bring you a message from the Lady Zekkah," went on the other, hurriedly.

Vance felt himself trembling with eagerness where a moment before he had stood upon his guard cool and collected. A few seconds of reflection, however, bade him be slow to admit the truth of his enemy's statement.

"Do not, I pray you, compel me to stand here," continued the alleged messenger. "I shall be seen by some one, and suspicion may rest upon me. I come to take you to the princess."

Vance had by this time entirely recovered his self-control, and the last announcement merely made his blood course a little faster through his veins. He had already decided that there could be no especial risk in admitting one man, provided he kept him carefully under watch. Fixing a seat, therefore, and placing the lamp so that its rays would fall upon the face of his visitor, he slid back the bolts, opened the door, and stood to one side.

The priest entered, carrying a fair-sized bundle under his arm, and took several steps into the room, glancing around to discover the whereabouts of his host. Vance seized the moment to close and bolt the door again. Then, as Mapo turned at the sound, he faced him and motioned to the seat. Had there been any treacherous design in the other's mind, he must have seen that the odds were all against its success, and, besides, he appeared to be unarmed.



"Your caution is needless," he said, seating himself with a supercilious smile. "Do you imagine that if we aimed at your life there would be any trouble about taking it?"

"I think I might make a good deal of trouble for you before you got it," said Vance, carelessly. "As for my caution, which you are pleased to sneer at, I prefer to judge of its necessity."

"And yet you will have to trust me if you wish to see her," said the other.

"That remains to be considered when I have learned who she is," replied Vance. "In the first place, pray deliver your message."

"My message is short," said the priest. "It is the Lady Zekkah's wish to speak with you, and she bade me bring you to her presence."

"What proof have you that you are not devising a snare for me?" asked Vance. "It is a most remarkable summons; and why should your princess desire an interview with a stranger whom she has hardly seen?"

"You seem to forget that your course has not been a secret," replied Mapo, again dropping into his sneering tones. "Aroo understands well this trick of your being lost,—a shallow one,—a very shallow one. You have been doing all you could to hasten the extinction of your own hopes, and I, the distrusted physician, alone offer you a chance to retrace your steps and perhaps even to set them in a wiser path."

"You are very benevolent," said Vance, bowing and realizing that he had almost caught the supercilious manner of his visitor.

"No, I am not benevolent," said the priest, calmly. "I have objects of my own to attain, and perhaps we can help each other. Meanwhile I await your answer."

Vance had been thinking hard ever since Mapo had announced his mission. He fully realized that it was more than likely that its object was to get the better of him in some way, and either capture or kill him, or, worse yet, to involve Zekkah herself, by some devilish piece of trickery. On the other hand, the story might be true, and by not seizing such an opportunity it was impossible to foretell what chances might be thrown away. Against personal violence his pistols and the mysterious destruction they could spread seemed to offer a fair defence. To be sure, it would be necessary, in a measure, to violate his agreement with Lirrihi, but to that it could be said that unforeseen circumstances had arisen, that his ally might fully approve of his contemplated action were there time to advise him of it, and that, in short, he was very much in the position of an officer cut off from all communication with his commander-in-chief and called upon, by a sudden emergency, to use his own judgment, even to the extent of breaking orders. The argument, however, which bore most strongly on his decision was the desperate nature of his enterprise and his consciousness that desperate chances must be taken at every turn in order that no possible advantage should be lost.

All this passed through the lieutenant's brain very rapidly, and, looking the priest straight in the face, he said,—

"I have decided. Lead on, and I will follow. Only be sure that at the first suspicion you are a dead man."



"You expose your benefactor to danger from your own fears," sneered Mapo. "However, I suppose I must take my chances. I had reserved this," he continued, commencing to unroll his bundle, "in case you should need further urging."

With these words he drew out and held toward Vance a golden cincture not much over three spans in circumference, which the latter recognized at once as the belt *Zelkah* had worn at the time of their short interview. To be sure, the priest's having it in his possession did not necessarily mean that it had been given him to be used as a pledge of good faith; but, as Vance had come to his own determination without knowing of its presence, he did not waste any time upon such considerations.

What the belt had been wrapped up in, he now saw, was a black cloak similar to those the priests wore, but considerably longer and provided with a hood.

"You must throw this about you," said Mapo, handing him the garment.

Vance complied, but without relaxing his grasp on his sword or allowing his eyes to stray from the movements of his companion. Then, unbolting and opening the door, he motioned to the priest to step out, following him closely as he did so and drawing the door to behind him. His guide halted for a moment and half turned.

"Lead on. I will follow you," said the American. There was a dangerous ring in his voice, and he rested his sword on his hip at half-thrust with the point presented directly at the other's body.

Mapo gave vent to a half-sniff, half-grunt, which might have meant many things, and, turning quickly, led the way in the direction of the palace. No one was passing in the streets; the moonbeams played through the clouds upon the white pavement of the square and bathed the walls of the houses with floods of pale light.

To Vance's surprise, his guide hurried past the long glittering front of the *Soveet's* dwelling and pushed on some distance beyond. Then, threading his way through several dark and narrow streets, where every corner seemed a fit lurking-place for ambuscades, he returned by a half-circle, and, stopping before a small postern at the rear of the palace, rapped softly three times. The door was opened immediately by a heavily cloaked figure,—a very tolerable double of the American himself. The latter had taken the precaution to shift his sword to his left hand and to grasp one of his revolvers in his right, so as to be armed to the best advantage in the event of a sudden attack in force. The sword might have sufficed for Mapo alone, but now perils were thickening at every step.

The priest had entered a low, dark passage, while the cloaked figure stood to one side, as if indicating that Vance also should pass. There seemed to be no option. He was in the enemy's stronghold, and he felt that it would be useless to attempt to keep all possible assailants in front. Therefore, with scarce a second's hesitation, he hurried after his guide and heard the door through which he had entered close behind him. Greatly to his relief, its guardian did not follow them.

There was nothing to lighten the darkness that shut him in, nothing to pilot him but the walls of the narrow hallway and the sound of his conductor's footsteps ahead. He could not help realizing how easy it would be for the latter to give him the slip at any moment, and yet his nerves and courage grew firmer and stronger as his power of defence against treachery became manifestly weaker. Several times the passage turned, and finally it terminated at a flight of stairs, of the presence of which Mapo took care to give timely warning. Then followed more passages, and then more steps, until suddenly they issued out into the open air.

A glance about him showed the American that they were on the roof of the palace, and that a large portion of its surface was laid out in a sort of garden, thick with waving, palm-like plants and glittering with the sprays of fountains.

Vance turned inquiringly to his guide, who had halted and faced him. The latter said nothing, but, raising his hand, pointed toward what seemed to be a structure of some kind that rose amid the thickest of the foliage. Then he threw himself down beside the opening in the roof through which they had ascended, and Vance, still holding his pistol, cocked and ready for use, walked cautiously forward among the plants. In a moment he had reached a bower, constructed of interlaced vines twined together so skilfully as to support each other without the aid of a sustaining lattice, and, as he paused at the entrance, another cloaked figure rose from a low seat and confronted him. Almost immediately the hood was thrown back, the mantle fell to her feet, and he stood face to face with Zekah.

She was robed in a long black tunic, unbelted, with flowing sleeves, and entirely unrelieved by any embroidery or ornament. No costume could have been less graceful, but her head was bare, and the single ray of moonlight that stole through the vines and fell upon her pale upturned face showed a beauty that the most disfiguring dress could not detract from.

Vance sprang forward with a short exclamation. Then he stood stock-still before the look of scorn that flashed from her eyes. There was absolute silence for a few moments. At last she spoke:

"You have regarded my words well. I thank you for permitting me to estimate the true value of your protestations."

Vance strove in vain to utter a word. After a short pause she went on:

"Was it not the part of a man to regard as sacred the wishes of one whom he professed to love? But you have presumed on what was but a moment of weakness, induced by what magic I know not, to involve me in perils of which you cannot conceive."

"Is it to tell me this that you have sent for me?" he said at last, regaining in a measure his power of speech, but still stunned and bewildered by her words.

"For this, and to take back that which I told you to my shame. Were it even true that I could have loved you in such unmaidenly haste, without the aid of magic, be sure your mad actions would have dispelled all."

"What do you wish that I should do?" said Vance, feeling and speaking as one in a dream.

Her face at once became animated with a strange eagerness, and she made as if to step forward.

"Fly,—escape, and at once," she said, quickly.

"How?" asked he, quietly, while a new light began to dawn slowly upon his mind.

"Go to my father. He will gladly give you a galley and crew; and you shall order them whithersoever you will," she continued, in beseeching tones.

A lover's intuition had enabled Vance to understand what no reasoning could have availed for. He made no reply, but sprang forward and caught her in his arms. For a moment she struggled against him. Then the tears burst from her eyes.

"How cruel you are!" she murmured.

"Cruel!" he said, speaking rapidly and in a voice vibrant with passion: "cruel to understand why you denied your own heart's words in order that I might be saved from peril,—to drive me away from you, who are the only life I have or care to have! You could not play your part to the end, though. Your nature is too truthful for that."

She was very quiet now, and made no effort to escape.

"What is death or suffering," he went on, eagerly, "in comparison with the joy of a moment like this?"

"It is nothing," she said, in the faintest of whispers, and then their lips met in a long kiss.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### MAPO.

It was some moments before either could regain even a measure of the self-control that had been swept away so completely. Zelkah was the first to speak: there was a note of deep dejection in her voice.

"And now, my beloved, it is I who have bound you hand and foot and delivered you over to those who seek your death. Why could not my heart have been firm to hold by the wise words of Mapo, inspired though they were by evil?"

A new train of ideas suddenly suggested itself to Vance.

"It was not you, then, lady, who devised this plan to send me away?" he asked, quickly.

There was a moment's hesitation. Then she said,—

"No."

Just why the physician of the Soveet—a member of the priestly caste—should interest himself in the safety of a foreigner and an enemy presented, for the moment, a puzzling question to the American. Both his perceptions and his judgment, however, seemed singularly clear on this night. It was certainly not probable that the priests feared his power and wished him away for their own sake. All Aroo's actions distinctly negatived such a supposition, and the high-priest was, of course, ignorant of the value of the weapons which gave Vance the

only advantage he possessed. He was almost beginning to divine the solution of the puzzle, in part at least, when Zekah spoke again.

"Listen," she said. "I will conceal nothing from you. It was Mapo that came and spoke of the perils to which your love exposed me, and tried to persuade me to send him to bring you into my presence in order that I might turn your love to hatred. Then, when I told him that I feared no perils, and when I sought to avoid his presence and words, he cunningly suggested that you too would surely be involved in my destruction, and explained that, if you could but be convinced that I despised you, your escape could be readily arranged. So I yielded; and you see how well I have carried out my purpose."

Vance kissed her again.

"But why does this man interest himself in my safety?" he asked, after a short silence.

She looked him full in the face and answered without hesitation,—

"It was not your safety that he desired; it was mine." Then she went on, blushing faintly, "I have often dreamed that he regarded me with a feeling the thought of which filled my whole soul with loathing. There were glances and stray words that told me this; and once he even had the presumption to say to me that a high-priest were no unfit mate for a soveet's daughter. I had heard that he aspired to succeed Aroo. Still, if I could save you, it mattered little whose help I invoked or how it was obtained."

Vance smiled when she finished speaking. What did he care now for Aroo and Mapo and Merrak? They were all as if leagues away.

"But, dearest," he said, "do you not see how little likely I would be to escape, even had you succeeded in your design and a galley been furnished? Assuming that Merrak and Aroo had consented to such a proceeding, your sailors, accustomed only to these island seas, would have had neither the will nor the courage to carry me the many days' journey necessary to gain a place of safety. It would be much easier to throw me into the sea and return with a tale of my arrival at my destination, and I have even grave doubt whether their orders, from Aroo at any rate, would not contain some such direction."

She looked at him, half terrified, while he was speaking, and, when he had finished, she said,—

"But at least there would have been a chance. Here there is none."

"There would have been no chance then to hold you in my arms, as now," he laughed; "and that is worth far more than safety. Besides, the danger is not nearly what you dread. I have learned of all these horrors, and the very thought of them made my blood run cold; but consider how many years are likely to pass before your Tao may light his fires again. Until then, we have nothing to fear, and when that time comes we shall doubtless have died long before."

"But Tao breathes fire when he is angry; and Mapo and Aroo have said that he is indignant at what has already happened."

"Aroo and Mapo do not know all things," said Vance, smiling. "I imagine Mapo would not be entirely pleased, could he see how little his plots have availed him thus far."

He was debating with himself as to his ability to make clear to her the laws that governed volcanic phenomena, when his ear caught a rustle in the foliage behind him.

Zelkah heard it too, and started from his arms with an exclamation of terror, as Vance, sword in hand, sprang quickly in the direction whence the sound had issued. Nothing was to be seen or heard. The branches and great leaves of the palms were swaying slightly, but whether disturbed by the passage of some body or by the impulse of the breeze was hard to tell. After a short but thorough search, he returned to where he had left Zelkah.

The girl was trembling, and he tried in vain to reassure her.

"You must go, and at once," she said, earnestly. "It cannot be far from morning, and even my father would kill you did he know that I had so far offended as to seek this interview. I will find means to communicate further—unless—unless you will yet grant my heart's prayer and fly from this terrible land."

For answer Vance only laughed softly, caught her once more in his arms, and kissed her, until, at last, she succeeded in slipping from him.

"Go now, and go quickly, if you would obey the least of my wishes," she said. "Above all, be cautious in what you say to Mapo."

"I will go, and I will be cautious," he answered; "but you must first tell me that you will try to put away these vain fears. There is a God who is able to bring to naught the power of this Tao of yours."

"I will promise anything. I will be brave and fear nothing, and remember only that you love me."

With this farewell, she turned, and in a moment was lost amid the darkness and the shadows of the plants, while Vance, overcoming the lover's impulse to follow and seek yet one more word, began to pick his way cautiously toward where he had left his guide.

He found the priest reclining just as he had thrown himself down when they parted, and apparently buried in deep slumber,—so deep, in fact, that it was several seconds before Vance could arouse him. Then he started to his feet in a bewildered way. Altogether, the incident recalled to the lieutenant's mind the sound that had startled Zelkah and himself. It seemed very unlikely that a man whose brain and heart were filled with the schemes and ambitions of which the princess had spoken would fall calmly asleep at such a moment, and the manner of his awakening had about it a strong suggestion of over-acting.

Concluding, however, that it would be unwise to show suspicion, Vance spoke jestingly of the other's somnolence, and suggested that it was time to make haste before daylight should overtake them.

"Perhaps you do not doubt my truth now," said Mapo, as he arose and settled his cloak. "Did the words of the Lady Zelkah bring you to better judgment?"

Vance felt that, in the light of the knowledge obtained, he had a new part to play, and one which demanded that he should appear to show a fuller confidence in his companion. He admitted that there was something of peril in this course, especially if his suspicions as to



the man's eavesdropping were correct. Still, there was no choice. A certain amount of frankness about matters with which the other must be more or less familiar seemed also politic.

Therefore he drew his brows together and answered,—

"Judgment is one thing, my friend, and the warm blood of youth is another. I have heard words to-night that filled me with sorrow, and I must ponder before I decide what their influence shall be."

"Yes," said Mapo, reverting to his old sneering tones; "the warm blood of youth is foolish, but it should know that it is better off when flowing within the body than when spattered over the stones."

They had now descended into the labyrinth of passages through which they had come, and Vance pressed closely after his guide. He breathed a sigh of relief to find himself at last passing through the narrow postern and out into the street. In accordance with his new policy, he now walked beside his companion, only falling back a step as they neared turns in the road, as if waiting to learn the proper direction. He had sheathed his sword, and his only precaution was to keep a sharp eye on the other and to hold his muscles in readiness to respond to any sudden call.

In this way they finally arrived at the house to which the Soveet had assigned him, and Vance, pushing open the door, entered quickly. He had half turned to see if Mapo was going to take his leave, but it was evident that the priest had no such intention, for he followed the American in, and, closing the door behind them, seated himself upon the same stool which he had occupied before. Surmising that the man had something further to say, and anxious to be rid of him as soon as possible, Vance also sat down and eyed him inquiringly. A short silence ensued, and then Mapo spoke:

"Will the stranger follow the advice of the Lady Zekah?"

"The stranger must have time to consider somewhat," said Vance, shortly, "but truly there seems little for him to hope for here."

"There is nothing to hope for here," pursued the other, bending forward and speaking in lower tones, "except through me."

"What do you mean?" queried Vance.

"This only: that, were Merrak dead, there would be a new Soveet, and Zekah would be free to marry whomsoever she would. If you say the word, I can kill Merrak."

Vance was fairly startled out of his composure by this point-blank proposal. A moment later, when he had gathered himself together a little, he tried to divine the possible motive, and found himself strongly inclined to doubt the good faith of the Soveet's favorite physician, or, more properly speaking, to doubt his *bad* faith to his master. To be sure, assuming that Mapo loved Zekah, their interests would be identical up to the point of freeing the princess from her terrible betrothal; and then, too, the crafty priest might have some scheme whereby Merrak's death could be charged to and ruin his rival. The longer he thought, the more he began to doubt his first conclusion and to believe that the proposition, as far as it went, was entirely *bona fide*.

"Well, what word do you say—yes or no?" asked Mapo, sharply, and apparently irritated by the thoughtful silence of the American.



"I say that you are even a more advanced scoundrel than I dreamed," said Vance, looking the other straight in the face. "What your motive is for such an offer I cannot imagine," he went on, craftily dissembling the results of his reflections; "but I am not accustomed to attacking even my enemies by such means. As for your Soveet, he has treated me most considerately, under circumstances——"

Suddenly he became conscious that Mapo was springing upon him. His early vigilance had been somewhat relaxed, both from motives of policy and by something akin to confidence born of the absence of any suspicious act on the priest's part. He knew that he could have been readily stabbed in the dark hallways of the palace, where the prick of the steel would have been his first warning, yet he had emerged safe and sound. Now his companion had chosen the moment when the lieutenant's mind was full of what he had just heard and his attention absorbed in the words he was uttering.

Before he could even get to his feet, the priest was upon him, and, in struggling to rise, Vance slipped and fell backward over the seat upon which he had been sitting. It was doubtless the accident alone that saved his life, for by it he escaped the stab of a short serpentine dagger which Mapo had plucked from under his robe and with which he struck viciously as he sprang.

The result of his fall, however, was even more far-reaching than to preserve him from the first thrust, for his assailant, expecting to be met body to body and finding a vacuum where he had looked for resistance, stumbled, and, striking the same stool with his foot, pitched forward upon the prostrate American, while the dagger slipped from his hand in his effort to preserve his equilibrium.

It was into a life-and-death struggle for the possession of this weapon that the fight now resolved itself. Mapo was uppermost, but Vance, whose presence of mind was, as I have said, always readiest in the greatest emergencies, caught the glitter of the steel where it lay, and managed to give it a kick that sent it over into one corner of the room. Meanwhile he pressed the other close in his arms,—so close as not even to permit of the priest's getting a grip on the throat of the man beneath him or using his hands with any effect.

In this position they writhed and twisted about, the Karanian trying hard to free himself, the American to roll him over and get uppermost. Their strength was not very unequal, but it soon became evident that the white man was possessed of more endurance. The struggles of his enemy appeared to grow more feeble, and a moment later, Vance twisted one leg around those of Mapo, and, exerting himself to his utmost, by a sudden effort turned the priest upon his back, at the same time breaking his hold and pushing himself away.

The advantage seemed to be his, but he had to do with a ready foe, for, as the islander fell, he caught sight of the hilt of Vance's sword, which the lieutenant had been unable to draw, and, grasping at it with both hands, drew it from its scabbard just as its owner gained his feet and sprang back. Before Vance could begin a new struggle for this weapon, Mapo had bounded up and was advancing upon him with a smile of malicious triumph on his dark face.

To use his pistols, the American still felt, would be dangerous in many ways, and he boldly determined to continue the combat on the present lines at any cost. Surely he was no worse off than at first. With an agility for which he had not given himself credit, he darted across the room, stooped, and possessed himself of his enemy's dagger, — a poor weapon against a sword, but certainly much better than nothing.

Mapo crept forward cautiously, and Vance, as he fell back and evaded him, soon saw that his adversary sought only to thrust, a purpose for which the islanders' swords were best adapted. He could guard this with his dagger better than he could a blow, and he was just meditating upon how to possess himself of the long cloak which he had worn that night and either wrap it about his arm or use it as the net of a retiarius, when his eye fell upon the stools on which they had been sitting. At the same moment the priest leaped at him and thrust furiously, but Vance, parrying with his dagger, bounded to one side, and before the other could divine his intention he had picked up one of the stools and hurled it with all his force full at Mapo's head. It was only a glancing blow, but, as the priest staggered and instinctively threw up both hands to ward it off, the American found his opportunity, and, rushing forward, plunged the dagger twice into his enemy's breast.

At least one of the thrusts must have struck safely home, for the Karanian gave voice to a half-stifled, gurgling cry, and, sinking down upon the floor, twitched once or twice and then lay still. Vance stood looking at the body and panting from his long-continued and violent efforts. Then he wiped the dagger upon the long black mantle, and, replacing it in the priest's bosom, proceeded to wrap the corpse up in the same garment. It must be disposed of somehow, he thought, and the now rapidly dawning light made it impossible to dream of carrying it away. There seemed to be nothing to do but roll it under the couch, so that it might be hidden in case any one should enter, to wash the splashes of blood from the floor, and to wait for the ensuing night to remove and bury it.

These things accomplished, bodily exhaustion proved all-powerful, and, throwing himself down upon the bed that concealed the body of his late would-be murderer, Vance slept more soundly than he had since the day when the Falcon had first sighted the island of Karana.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE BRIDAL SUMMONS.

EXHAUSTED by fatigue and excitement, the American rested all day. Once he was aroused by a servant bringing food. Then he fell asleep again.

As the night closed in, his sleep became more troubled. Strange noises seemed to sound in his ears, and he dreamed that a great mob, composed of many thousands of dark-robed priests, was pursuing him,

and that each was blowing upon a brazen trumpet, the notes of which seemed to shape themselves into his name. Just as they were about to overtake him, a crash of sound louder and nearer caused him to start from his slumber. In a moment he realized that some great commotion was taking place in the square without. The hum of many voices came to his ears, but low and indistinct, as if each were suppressed by some pervading sentiment of sorrow or terror. Suddenly a low deep detonation rang out, like the explosion of some distant magazine. Then a blare of trumpets, wild, fitful, and discordant, drowned all other sounds, to be followed again by the wailing of the crowd. As nearly as his aroused senses could locate it, the trumpet clangor came from the direction of the great black temple that stood near the Soveet's palace.

Vance sprang from his couch, and, approaching the window, looked out. He saw the torch-lit space before him packed through its whole length and breadth with a mass of humanity. Men and women of both races were mingled together, and upon such faces as he could distinguish was a look partly of awe, partly of deep dejection. Their eyes seemed bent upon some object above and beyond the building he occupied; and then a suspicion of the meaning of it all flashed through his mind.

Turning, he rushed to the rear part of his new domicile, and, mounting upon the couch, tried to look out through one of the small ventilators. At first he could see nothing except that the moon and stars were obscured by a dark cloud, through which shone a dull red glare; but upon trying a second of the ventilators a sight was revealed that froze his blood with horror. The summit of the mountain was all ablaze with the mighty fires of a great volcano in full eruption. Clouds of vapor and ashes rose and spread themselves across the heavens, while now and again the detonation of some explosion of pent-up lava rolled toward him, to be followed by the blaring of the trumpets from the direction of the temple and the wailings of the crowd in the city square.

Upon Vance's mind, dazed at first by an imperfect realization of the catastrophe, was gradually forced an overmastering sense of the frightful fatality that seemed to pursue him. A volcano that had rested for many years, and which there had seemed excellent reason to hope might now be extinct, had broken forth with terrific violence at the very moment when its activity was fraught with results of which he dared not think. For a few moments he was oppressed by a feeling of almost superstitious dread, and he found himself wondering whether the beings of barbarous demonologies might not, after all, have existence and be vested by God with some mysterious powers for evil.

But soon a new commotion of sounds came to his ears. It was the measured clashing of cymbals and the tramp of marching men. Nearer it drew and nearer, until Vance, maddened by the terrible situation, forgetful of the dead priest, and heedless of whatever risks his action might entail upon him, hurried to the door and pushed his way out into the crowd.

For a while, absorbed as they were in what they saw in the dis-

tance, few seemed to notice the man who, bare-headed and with wild eyes, elbowed his way through them. Then they began to draw back from around him, whispering to each other and pointing out his whereabouts to those who were behind. There did not seem to be much of hostility in their attitude, but rather something akin to that awed interest with which spectators view a criminal on his way to execution.

Scarcely had Vance, in the disturbed state of his mind, become conscious of the diversion of public interest which his appearance had occasioned, when the dense mass before him opened to right and left, and he saw advancing, from the direction of the great temple, a long procession of priests. In front was Aroo himself. Then came his companions, marching four abreast. Far to the rear, the cymbals of the musicians marked time for the priestly marchers, while over all the light of a thousand torches flashed and played.

Involuntarily the American drew himself to one side. He was now almost in front of the entrance of the palace, and, as the head of the column drew near to where he stood, he caught the eyes of the high-priest fixed upon him with an expression which could mean nothing but malignant hatred and the consciousness of triumph. It was only for an instant, and then Aroo turned and began to ascend the broad steps, followed by his grim cohorts.

At that moment Vance felt a sharp pull at his sleeve, and, wheeling quickly, saw Nhar, with his eyes apparently absorbed in watching the passing procession and his finger at his lips as if to forbid questioning or even recognition. Perceiving that he was observed, the boy turned away in seeming carelessness, but as his gaze crossed Vance's face it carried with it a decided meaning. Then he commenced to work his way back through the crowd, and the American followed with such speed as caution permitted; for he had now recovered something of his self-control, and began to feel that false calmness which often comes from the magnitude of an emergency so great as to benumb nervousness itself; just as the shock of the most serious physical injuries sometimes deadens the pain.

Thus, making fair headway among people who were too deeply absorbed in what was occurring to observe whether they were jostled or not, the two soon found themselves at the edge of the square, from which point Nhar, plunging into a side street, quickened his pace and finally broke into a run. Vance followed, and saw the other dart into a small house which he recognized as the one where he had left Lirrhi on the previous evening. In a moment the American had also entered, and found the priest sitting up, supported by cushions, and with a feverish excitement burning in his dark eyes.

"Ah!" he said, "you have come. That is wise. It has happened as I feared."

"But the horrible fatality of it!" cried Vance. "Who could dream of such a chance before some plan could be devised——"

He stopped short, for the priest's face wore an expression so peculiar as to check at once the trend of his thoughts and direct them in some new channel, the line of which, however, he tried vainly to make out.

"What is it?" he asked, helplessly, after a short silence. "What do you mean?"

Lirrhi did not seem to hear the questions. "They tell me," he said, "that Tao is angry, and that Aroo has gone to the Soveet to demand the sacrifice."

"Now? At once?" cried Vance, springing to his feet.

"There will be little delay, as there has been little," replied Lirrhi, gloomily. "They fear your presence. That is evident."

Goaded to madness by a sudden realization of his utter impotence, Vance waited to hear no more. One idea dominated all others,—to rush into the royal presence, shoot down his arch-enemy, and be killed, after slaying as many of the fiend-priests as his revolvers and sword would suffice for. Without heeding the cries of Lirrhi or Nhar's attempt to restrain him, he burst out into the street again and commenced a mad race back to the square.

Vaguely conscious that some one was pursuing him, he redoubled his efforts, and, reaching the outskirts of the crowd, drove into them as a ship under full sail cleaves the ocean in her path. Angry faces, fierce threats, even drawn swords, were in his wake; but the violence that called them into being soon left them far behind and confined by a fast-closing barrier of men that blocked the chance of pursuit. So, buffeting his way, he at last gained the steps, panting and breathless, his clothing torn almost to shreds, but grasping tightly the weapons upon which he depended for his final act of vengeance.

The last of the priests had disappeared, but the musicians remained without in a solid body, and, having turned about, were facing the crowd. Their dismal music still droned fitfully, as if to maintain and strengthen the spirit of depression which possessed the people.

Without attempting to burst through their ranks, Vance bounded up the steps, and, turning to one side, skirted the dense array. They viewed him lazily, with more of wonder than any other sentiment, and made no effort whatever to prevent the wild-looking, half-clad man from entering the palace. A moment more, and he found himself in the great court where he and his shipmates had lately been banqueted.

A strange scene lay before him. At the farthest end of the enclosure he could see, by the fitful gleam of the torches, Merrak seated upon a low throne, his chin resting upon his hand. Behind and on either side of him was ranged a close array of the nobility, brilliant with their snowy tunics and scarlet cloaks, while, in sharp contrast of colors, the entire court, up to almost the Soveet's footstool, was packed with a dense mass of black mantles and dark faces. All the priesthood of the island seemed to be gathered together, but not a sound came from the great multitude except the voice of one man, speaking in low, measured tones.

Vance raised himself a little by the aid of the base of a column, so as to see over the heads of those before him, and made out with some difficulty that the voice came from a small cleared space directly in front of the throne and occupied by a single individual. A second glance told him that it was Aroo himself. Then he dropped to the



floor again and began to push his way toward the spot where he knew the fatal words were being uttered.

In a few moments, he scarce knew how, he had gained the front of the circle that enclosed the high-priest. The commotion occasioned by his approach had not escaped the latter's attention, and, as the foreigner burst through the last line, Aroo turned and regarded him fixedly for a moment. Then he faced the Soveet again and went on with his speech.

Amid all his excitement, Vance could not but note and marvel at the strange forbearance with which his furious intrusion had been received by a vast concourse of armed men, every one of whom he recognized by a hundred signs to be his deadly enemy. Sobered for an instant by this thought, utterly exhausted by his terrible efforts, and feeling secure for the moment in what seemed the contempt of his foes, he forbore to accomplish his purpose at once. He reasoned grimly that his hand would be much steadier and surer when his strength and wind returned. So he stood and listened to the words of the high-priest of Tao, to whom his own arrival seemed to have furnished a new theme.

"It is not strange," continued that worthy, "that Tao is angry with his people; for have they not listened to the impious words of the stranger who thinks to subvert all things to the measure of his wishes? And have not even you, O prince, given heed in your heart to the thought that Tao should relinquish the bride which the years bring to him? Not long since my blood boiled within me at the thought of the insult, and I was then minded to ask the life of the stranger. But Tao is a god that enforces his own rights, and I now see clearly that it is not his will that the ignorance of any man should bring him to everlasting blackness. Therefore it is ordered that this fellow should live to see her to whom he would so vainly aspire given unto the ruler of the universe, who has been pleased to dwell among and bless us who have ever revered and served him.

"Let my lord now give the word that the nuptials of the maid, his daughter, be solemnized according to the ancient rites. Speak, honored one of Tao! Behold now the flaming crown that rests upon the god's brow and threatens to consume all worlds that honor him not."

As he finished speaking, he pointed toward the mountain-top, clearly visible from that part of the court. The eyes of the Soveet followed his finger, and rested for a moment upon the lurid coronet gleaming through the night and through the volumes of smoke and vapor that encumbered the atmosphere even where they stood. Vance saw the prince shudder slightly as his glance fell again upon the stern, cruel face of the priest. Several times he gathered himself as if to speak, but his voice would not answer his bidding. His face was drawn with an expression of intense anguish. The trumpets and cymbals had ceased their clamor. Even the mountain flamed in silence, and Vance almost imagined that he could hear the fall of the flakes of white ashes descending in an endless cloud upon their heads.

A sudden consciousness of the absurdity and ignorance of it all



flashed through his mind. Surely these people were sufficiently enlightened to be able to understand the truth about such phenomena. Moved by an impulse born of this idea, and perhaps with the thought that it would be better to provoke violence than to begin by shooting men down in cold blood, he stepped forward into the open space, and, fixing his eyes upon the Soveet, said,—

"Will you permit me to speak?"

The stricken ruler did not answer. He looked wonderingly, almost vacantly, at the strange figure before him. Aroo turned quickly at the sound of the new voice and took a step toward the interloper. Then a smile of contemptuous malice curled his lips, and he made no effort at interruption.

"Can it be," pursued Vance, speaking rapidly and heedless of the many blunders and the rude accent which caused some of his enemies to laugh outright, "that a people dwelling with Nature are ignorant of the causes which make mountains burst forth with flame and smoke and lava, as does yours now? Do you not know how the gases, generated deep in the earth, break from their prison-houses time and again and find vent through many such cratered summits in all parts of the world, and that men call them volcanoes? I myself have seen as many as fifty. Surely you would not hold these all to be the abodes of gods?" He stopped, for it was not difficult to note the spirit with which his words were received. Among the priests they excited an animosity which bade fair to effect his secondary purpose, and which the restraining voice and hand of Aroo seemed hardly able to hold in check. The face of that potentate was inscrutable. As for the nobles who flanked the throne, some gazed upon the speaker with contempt, some with pity for what they evidently considered the unbalanced state of his mind. Even he himself was conscious how feeble his statements must sound to his auditors.

Still they served to rouse the Soveet from the condition of apparent collapse into which he had sunk.

"Why did you not remain in the house which I assigned to you?" he said, sternly. "I have borne much from your disregard of my wishes and my warnings. It is your action that has brought the anger of Tao himself upon me and my people, and has torn from me my child, who might yet (for I have ever honored and obeyed the god and his sons) have comforted many years of my life, and perhaps even been spared to its end and escaped the accursed honor that hangs over her race. You, on the other hand, suffer nothing you have not yourself invited. Do you dream we could be fools enough to believe it to be insensate nature that menaces with a danger that experience has often shown is abated at once by the sacrifice which my people now demand? Is nature amenable to such a measure? You speak whereof you know nothing. Would I had slain you when your life was first demanded by him who now protects you from me,—even the favorite son of Tao whom you never cease to blaspheme."

Then, turning to the high-priest, he continued in a firm voice, "Son of Tao, I, the Soveet, have heard your words, and, as the law and my people demand, I accept in my own name and in the name of

the most happy virgin my daughter the offer of marriage you have borne to me this day. May she find favor for herself and for us all in the eyes of her Lord and husband, and may he pardon the breast of a father who relinquishes his offspring with tears—even to this, the most exalted of fates. Let my lord Aroo and the proper officers take measures that the usual ceremonies be duly observed. It is decreed."

He sank back in his seat and made a motion as if to draw his mantle over his face. Vance's teeth were clenched, and he saw nothing of the scene that whirled around him. He clutched his revolver tightly while he strove to brush aside the cloud that obscured his vision and bade fair to obstruct his aim. At that moment he felt his wrist firmly grasped and a hand laid over his mouth.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### A CONFLICT OF AUTHORITY.

It would have been difficult for Vance to understand, much less explain, the strange calm which came over him at this first touch of restraint. The interruption seemed to dispel at once every impulse that was dragging him toward the suicidal act upon which his mind had been set, and now, without opposition, without even recognizing the agency, he suffered himself to be drawn away to one side; and when he had regained a consciousness of his surroundings it was to find himself being hurried through the deserted streets of the city. Then gradually, but still without the aid of his now rapidly clearing eyesight, he began to realize that the hand which gripped his wrist was that of Nhar. All volition on his own part seemed to be suspended, but his thoughts were free and active, nor were they of a nature to afford him even reasonable satisfaction. He had never, in past years, had reason to believe himself a man of weak character, and yet he could not but admit that in the present emergency he had acted like the veriest child,—headstrong, yet led by every foolish impulse when left to himself; and, on the other hand, ready to give up his purpose and fall under the influence of a mere boy whenever that influence was exerted by touch or even presence. He was beginning to entertain an almost superstitious dread of these dark islanders, whose impassive faces seemed to hide such mysterious powers, and he ceased to wonder that the descendants of the Carthaginian fugitives, with all their superiority of knowledge and equipment, had in time fallen so completely under the sway of an inferior race. Nothing but a consciousness of the most absolute power, he reasoned, could have impelled Aroo to treat him with the personal forbearance which he had now experienced more than once, while the control which savages like Lirrhi and Nhar exercised over him, an officer of the American navy and a man of cultivated mind and broad experience, seemed explicable only on the score of occultism, or at least mesmeric influence. These thoughts, added to his sense of absolute helplessness and dependence, were in no wise calculated to foster conceit, and therefore it was that

he arrived at Lirrho's house with feelings very much akin to those of a disobedient child detected in some act for which punishment is impending.

In such a frame of mind he entered, but there was no look of reproof in the priest's face. This, too, was in a sense humiliating. It seemed to show that he also regarded Vance as a child whose lapses of obedience or good judgment were to be expected and condoned; and to be so regarded by another was much worse than to admit the fact to one's self.

Without a word as to this latest and very broad breach of their agreement, Lirrho pointed to a veiled figure standing in the shadow at the rear of the room, and said,—

"This woman wishes to speak with you. I sent Nhar to bring you to her."

Vance's heart leaped as his eye fell upon the visitor; but at that instant she threw her veil aside, and he saw that it was the elder of the maids who had attended him on the first night he had spent in the Soveet's palace. She seemed now much agitated and somewhat distrustful of those around her, for, beckoning rather imperiously to the American, she drew him to the farthest corner of the room and began speaking in a low tone, but very rapidly, as though fearful of forgetting her message:

"My mistress sent me to tell you three things: that she loves you alone and always; that she commands you to make no effort to save her, which she knows to be hopeless, but, on the other hand, adjures you to use every endeavor to escape from this place; and, third, that I give you her farewell for all time, unless—" the woman seemed to hesitate for a moment—"unless, in some future life, your god shall be more powerful than Tao, our master, and you can persuade him to kill the devourer of virgins and release those whom he holds in thrall. That she bids me tell you to keep as your only hope."

In a moment she had drawn her cloak about her face again and darted out. Vance sprang forward, bent upon compelling some further speech or at least sending a return message; but the voice of Lirrho, raised in such a tone of absolute command as he had never heard in it before, compelled him to halt in his tracks.

"What new foolishness were you bent upon now?" said the priest.

Vance's brain was clear enough to note the assurance of power conveyed by the past tense of the verb.

"To send back word that I love her and will save her or die also," he said, as he stood hesitating between obedience and rebellion.

"Are all white men as silly as your people and our men from the sea?" murmured the other, wearily. "Come near now, and listen to the wisdom of dark races. It is but lovers' folly, for which there is no time, to say that you love her. She knows that you have remained at much peril, and she knows it is for that reason. As for your other message, it can but further disturb her with fears for your safety, without bringing any hope of success. Why is it that white men seem always anxious to defeat their own ends?"

"What end have I to look to, except the end of my life?" said

Vance, gloomily, as he sank upon a low stool. Then he sprang to his feet again. "Will you tell me," he asked, "whether there is any good reason now why I should not force my way through them and see her and speak to her?"

"Be patient. You would be cut down before you had gained a tenth of the way. Do not dream that the forbearance of the priests will last always; and remember that even the people themselves are ready to tear you to pieces, for they look upon you as the cause of all their troubles and those of their ruler,—as an enemy of their god's."

"And an enemy of their fiend-god I am," interrupted Vance, quickly,—“one that has forces at command of which they and you know nothing; who carries the lives of ten men at his belt. If white men are fools, they at least know secrets of war that to the peoples who depend upon sword and spear seem miracles of thunder and lightning and death."

The eyes of Lirrhi flashed with a sudden gleam of satisfaction, but he showed little curiosity.

"If that be so," he said, "save your magic for the time when it may avail."

"They shall avail me now, at least to see her," cried Vance. "As for being killed myself, I imagine that's pretty definitely down on the programme, isn't it?"

He moved toward the door. Nhar was crouching in a corner with head upon his breast and body rocking slowly to and fro. Lirrhi bent his dark eyes fixedly upon the recalcitrant.

"Would you rather see her and die or save her and perchance live?" he said, slowly.

"Tell me how, then, in God's name!" exclaimed the American, turning quickly and approaching the couch. "You treat me as a child; you tell me nothing of your plans, and yet expect me to rely upon them and remain idle even when every hope seems to have slipped away before my eyes."

"I treat you as a child because you are a child," said Lirrhi, sternly; "and those who would be trusted must show themselves worthy of trust. If you have measures of your own that promise success, I shall not hinder you from pursuing them; for it is no small thing that a priest of my race should be false to his god and his fellows. I have risked much for you, and I am ready to risk more. My life is already in the cast; but I owe to you more than life, and we pay our debts. I will tell you nothing. Trust me or not, as you choose; but if you trust you must obey, or I shall fall with you to no purpose,—which would be as unwise as are your actions."

Vance again felt himself wavering under the strength of this strange man. The rather scornful question as to his own plans was one well calculated to bring him to his senses. Lirrhi might be a miracle of treachery, he reasoned, bent upon playing his benefactor false in the interest of his caste, but, even were this so, nothing could be lost by waiting for a day longer before consummating a purpose which looked only to revenge, and perhaps a word, and a pressure of the

hand, to be purchased at the price of self-annihilation. It was, however, with little confidence in the result that he yielded.

"Will you not even tell me how soon we shall strike?" he asked, seating himself again.

The priest seemed busy with his thoughts. When he answered, his voice was softer.

"The time may be soon, but not until they take the maiden to the nuptial house of Tao. Then, if you are as brave and strong as you are heedless and wilful, we shall strike, and I shall pay my debt. I had hoped to delay as long as might be, that my own strength should be restored and fortified the more,—for the task is no light one."

"You are right, and I am a fool," cried Vance. "A sane man would not need to be told that he could rescue a woman more readily from a solitary hut in the woods than from a crowded city. We shall go there the first night, then?"

"No," said Lirrhi, with a touch of impatience in his tones: "unless you still wish to fail and die. Do you think Aroo also is bereft of reason? There will be thirty armed priests watching day and night around the house, and others not far away, until——"

"We shall have a chance even against that number," said Vance. He was once more calm and deliberate,—even a little ashamed of his late outbreak.

"Do you accept my terms?" said Lirrhi, without heeding the interruption. "Remember, Aroo will not be there, and while he lives you can hope for no safety, even should you kill or put to flight all the guards."

"And you will at least help me to kill him if we fail?"

"Wicked men fall sometimes into their own snares," replied the priest, evasively.

"Well, I will obey your commands," said Vance, after a short pause; "if you are ready to trust me again, when I tell you all I have done." And in a few words he narrated the adventure of the preceding night.

"You did both ill and well," said Lirrhi: "ill, to admit Mapo, and doubly ill, to go with him; well, to refuse his treacherous offer, and doubly well, to kill him. I will take care that the body be safely disposed of. And now it is wise that you should exchange your torn garments for clothes that are less strange. Nhar will give you a priest's robe and tunic and stain your face and hands and feet. You shall remain here, too, and sleep in the loft. Aroo does not wish you to be killed, but doubtless many of the people are thirsty for your blood, and, since your foolish action of to-night, caution is doubly necessary."

Unable to question the very manifest wisdom of this suggestion, Vance followed the boy up a ladder through a trap-door, and into a low loft that covered half of the ground chamber. Here he was soon transformed by deft fingers into a very fair semblance of a minister of that cult against the whole power of which they three were to pit their slender strength. His moustache and the front of his head were closely shaven, but he took care to buckle his pistol-belt under a fold of the tunic which fell over and concealed the weapons. His sword, too, he



could not bring himself to exchange for the short waving weapon befitting his new character, so the plan was finally devised of swinging it over his shoulder, where it hung down his back hidden by the black cloak. The native sword was then bound at his side over the pistols, and Nhar, stepping back, surveyed the result of his labors with as much satisfaction as the dim lamplight would permit of. Then he disclosed a small store of provisions and a jar of water which he had brought with him, placed them near the pile of old garments that were evidently intended to serve as a bed, and, with a parting injunction that Vance should remain there and be silent until notified that it was time to act, extinguished the lamp and descended into the room below,—closing the trap-door behind him.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BEGINNING.

LEFT to his own thoughts, the prisoner began first to speculate as to how far the night was advanced. At last he fell asleep, and awoke to transfer his speculations to the day. This proved a more solvable problem, for, by the increasing dimness of certain shreds of light that lay near cracks under the eaves, he judged that the sun must be already low; and then he watched them, as it seemed to him, for hours and hours before they had entirely faded out. After that he lay and listened to the sounds of never-ceasing activity that rang through the city. Several times he realized that large bodies of men were marching through streets not far distant; for the tramp of moving feet, mingled with words of command, interrupted the blare of trumpets and clash of cymbals that came almost constantly to his ears from the direction of the great square. Finally, however, all the noises began to die slowly away, still sounding from time to time, but as if from a greater and greater distance, until the night seemed to swallow them up.

Suddenly it flashed through his mind that the priests were most probably now escorting their victim to the place of sacrifice. That explained all. With a strong effort he crushed down the spirit of insubordination which had again begun to assert itself. He remembered that by what was evidently intended as a refinement of cruelty, but most fortunately in the present instance, food sufficient to sustain life for several days was placed in the living tomb, and that, apart from the agony of mind connected with such a situation, no physical suffering need be apprehended for a considerable time. Cheered somewhat by this reflection, he comforted himself as well as he could, and toward morning sank again into a troubled sleep.

How long he slept there was no means of knowing, but gradually he became conscious of a strange, monotonous sound droning in his ears. At first he tried to ignore it and go to sleep once more; but, in spite of all his efforts, his faculties seemed gradually sharpened to almost abnormal acuteness.

The vague noise resolved itself into the unmistakable groaning



of a human voice, and evidently of some one in deep agony. Vance struggled to speak, to ask the name of the sufferer and how he had come or been brought to his hiding-place, but the words would not form themselves. Then he imagined that Lirrhi was dying in the room below; perhaps he had been attacked and wounded by assassins. He determined that he must descend to help him; for if the priest died, all hope would be gone; and yet the effort to move proved as vain as the effort to speak.

And now a sudden glare of light illumined the loft,—not the light of day, but the yellow gleam of fire. He could make out a figure writhing and tossing upon the floor near the trap-door through which he had entered, and the figure was unmistakably a woman's.

Dumfounded at such an apparition, his mind was groping blindly to explain her presence, when she slowly rose and tottered toward him; and he recognized, clad in gorgeous robes of scarlet and gold and decked with unnumbered jewels that flashed weirdly, the Princess Zekah. Then, as his eyes dwelt for a moment on her features, he turned, and, burying his head among the stuff upon which he lay, burst into a paroxysm of tears and sobs. The face he had seen was drawn with an emaciation that could indicate only the presence of death; the cheeks and jaws seemed bursting through the yellow skin; while the eyes had dilated until they appeared almost larger than the head itself. The figure, too, matched well with the terrors of the face, for the rich garments hung upon it as upon a skeleton. A breath as of famine itself was wafted to his nostrils, and at last his mind sprang to a realization of the truth. Lirrhi had been guilty of the blackest treachery. Some drug had been mingled with his food or drink, and days—perhaps weeks—had passed as a few hours. She was dead, and now her spirit had come to arouse him and to call for revenge upon the fiends who had wrought all this wickedness and woe. He strove to rise, but at that moment he felt his arms pinioned to his sides and distinguished the face of Aroo himself within a few inches of his own, the eyes glaring into his with an expression of unquenchable hate.

Gathering all his powers for one final effort, he clinched furiously with his adversary, while the sorrowful shade stood near, silent, gazing at the combat. Suddenly both seemed to disappear. He found himself with his arms free, half kneeling upon the tossed and tumbled pile of material that had composed his couch; and then awakening consciousness told him that all, the vision and the grapple, had been but the phantasms of a dream which his troubled mind had called into being. It was many minutes, however, before he could convince himself of this, so real were all the terrible details, and so complete the physical exhaustion that had supervened. He shuddered at the recollection; but at last his mind grew clearer, the mist of sleep became entirely dissipated, and he noticed from the light streaming through the cracks that the day must be far advanced.

And now a new anxiety began to molest him. Why had not some word come from Lirrhi? In spite of his knowledge that the experiences of the last few minutes had been a dream, he was beginning to find himself attaching almost an occult import to whatever occurred in

this strange land. How far the effect was strengthened in the present instance by the certainty, born of the evidences of the past night, that Zelkah was already confined in that awful chamber, would have been difficult to determine; but his growing impatience was on the point of asserting itself to the extent of once more provoking him to break his parole and to descend into the room below for at least new information.

It was a fortunate chance that he experienced some difficulty, in the half-darkness, in finding the trap-door through which he had entered; for, as he felt carefully around, there came to his ears the unmistakable sound of voices in conversation beneath him. He ceased searching for the movable boards, and, putting his ear close to the floor, listened eagerly. There could be no possible doubt that several persons were below, and, while their words were indistinguishable, he recognized one voice as that of Lirrhi and that it was raised in protest. Then another person, who certainly was not Nhar, replied in lower, deeper tones that thrilled through him indescribably; and again Lirrhi exclaimed, this time louder and more clearly, as if he wished his words to reach Vance's ears,—

"I do not know why you thought me cognizant of his whereabouts. Have you examined the house which the Soveet assigned him?"

Once more the answer was too low to be caught by the listener, but Lirrhi's next speech disclosed its import:

"Then rest assured that some of our people have made away with him in their anger;" and later, in reply to a further murmur of the visitor's, he said, "Doubtless the priests would obey you, but the people are incensed past endurance. They know nothing of your deeper schemes for vengeance. Perhaps even this absence of Mapo may be in some way connected with his disappearance."

The conversation then sank into lower tones and finally ceased altogether, but to the fugitive it had been significant in many ways. It removed whatever doubt he might have had as to the good faith of Lirrhi, and made him more willing to abide by the plans devised by the priest. There was no reasonable question in his mind but that the other speaker had been either Aroo or some emissary sent by him to discover Vance's whereabouts, and it was perfectly evident that Lirrhi, in dispelling whatever suspicions the visitor might have entertained, had committed himself very deeply. Therefore the fugitive awaited the outcome with more patience and confidence than he had yet felt, while he winced to think what the result might have been had he succeeded in his attempt to descend.

Hour after hour dragged along wearily enough, and by the time the light between the crevices again began to grow dim, indicating the approach of another night, his nerves, if not his doubts, were once more active.

Scarcely, however, had utter darkness set in, when he was startled by a fumbling at the trap-door, and the sound of a bolt sliding back told him that his friends had not relied so entirely upon his prudence as to neglect more substantial precautions. He was not in a mood to harbor the momentary feeling of irritation aroused by this evidence that they still regarded him very much as an unruly boy, and he

almost smiled when his common sense forced him to admit, on second thought, that such an attitude was quite justifiable.

In a moment the boards rose slowly and a head appeared from below. The words "Descend now, and be silent," came to his ears in a whisper, followed by "It is I, Nhar."

Hastily Vance followed the boy down the ladder, having first assured himself that his weapons were both concealed and readily available. A single lamp lighted the lower room, but it was several minutes before his eyes became accustomed even to that. Then he saw Lirrhi standing erect with his sword and dagger thrust in his belt. Nhar also was fully armed, and carried, in addition to his weapons, several short torches made of some resinous substance. It was evident that the time for action had at last arrived, and Vance's heart leaped at the thought that he would now be able to strike a blow for his own cause and show that he was not altogether a child to be patronized and guided and restrained.

A feeling, however, of concern crossed his mind as to the ability of Lirrhi to take part in such an expedition as seemed to have been projected.

"But your hurt?" he asked, looking anxiously at the priest. "Can you go with us without danger?"

The thin lips curled slightly.

"Your race is a strange one," he said. "When others hold back you would rush forward, and when they are ready you hold back. We, on the other hand, follow a purpose once resolved upon. When it is time to do a thing we are able to do it. No, I shall not go without danger, but I shall run no more risk than you do,—perhaps not as much, for there are many men to be killed, and I shall not be able to help you in that way, as I might if entirely whole."

He raised his mantle, and Vance saw that he was wrapped in a net-work of crossed bandages, as skilfully applied as if by the most accomplished surgeon.

"We live frugally and are hardy and healthy," he added, reassuringly, "and my bones would knit in half the time it would take a white man's. In two days more I should have been well; but, as it is, you will not find me far behind you, in endurance at least. If I be not as forward in the fighting, you may thank your own impatience for it."

For a moment Vance found himself wondering which he would rather face, the cunning and malignant enmity of Aroo, or the patronizing, superior friendship of Lirrhi. Then he recalled a statement Deshon had once made as to the remarkable readiness to heal, noticed in the wounds of certain animals and certain savage races, as though it were a special provision of nature to compensate for their lack of the knowledge and the means for artificial treatment. All such thoughts, however, were rapidly driven away by the grim joy that came to him with the news that there was fighting to be done.

At a word from Lirrhi the lamp was now extinguished by Nhar, who then opened the door cautiously, and, after looking up and down the street, motioned for the others to come out. As the priest left the

room, Vance saw that he carried in his hand an oblong wooden tablet, about a foot square, inscribed with Phœnician characters and provided with a hook at the top.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE FIRST BLOW.

THE night was dark, devoid of moon or stars. Only the glare of the volcano illumined all the western heavens, while the cloud of fine white ashes still hung over the city and descended slowly, until it had now covered the streets to the depth of an inch or more with its sepulchral cloak.

Lirrhi, followed by his two companions, turned his steps toward the great square. From time to time men passed them, but the spectacle of two priests with an attendant was not one to excite comment, and Vance congratulated himself upon the wisdom and completeness of his disguise.

At length they reached the square, and, crossing it, approached the palace.

There the lieutenant noticed, for the first time, along the side nearest the temple, a row of low posts, on several of which tablets were hanging like that which Lirrhi had brought with him. The characters with which these were inscribed were, of course, undecipherable in the darkness. Lirrhi at once proceeded to affix his to one of the unoccupied posts, and then, without vouchsafing any explanation, turned aside, and, passing close by the temple, led the way in the direction of the mountain.

Vance had not been enough interested in the posts and the pendent tablets to ask any questions. He was too eager to get at the real work that lay before them, and now, as they hurried through the gate and, leaving walls and houses behind them, struck out along the broad, well-paved road that led to the sacred ground, his blood began to course more swiftly through his veins, and his step and carriage bore witness that he felt himself free at last from the irksome bonds of absolute subordination to which his peculiar position had compelled him to submit. The consciousness that he had badly needed these same bonds did not help to make them more grateful,—which is an unreasonable and unpraiseworthy attribute of human nature.

For upwards of half an hour they followed the road by which they had returned to the city. Then Lirrhi struck off along an almost imperceptible wood-path which branched to the right and seemed to lead through the densest thickets and toward the wildest and least inhabited part of the island. Nothing was visible in the darkness. The undergrowth was too heavy to permit of carrying a lighted torch; and Nhar was even compelled to kneel from time to time, to make sure they had not wandered from their way. As for Vance, he soon lost all idea of locality, and it was only when his foot struck against a broad, flat stone that he divined they had at last reached the border of the sacred ground.

As they began the ascent, circling the mountain in the opposite direction to that followed by Nhar when leading him to his first place of concealment, the full terrors of the eruption became apparent. The branches and foliage of trees no longer obscured the sky, now all aglow with the light which seemed doubly lurid against the black background of smoke and vapor. Explosions followed each other in quick succession, and at each outburst a great pillar of fire shot up many hundred feet. He could even hear the molten streams of lava forcing their way down the steep decline and leaping in cascades of flame over the precipices that lay in their paths.

The course which the party had chosen was free from this source of danger, the only menace to their safety being the fall, from time to time, of huge stones that, hurled upward by the explosion of the subterranean gases, came crashing back through trees and bushes, and sometimes, unless buried in the earth by the force of their descent, bounded away down the mountain-side, carrying ruin and desolation in their paths. Vance soon concluded that he could quite pardon the natives for their dislike of himself, if they dreamed him in any way responsible for the horror that enveloped their island; his only wonder was at the forbearance of a people so barbarous as to believe in such an agency and so cruel as to seek to stay it by so terrible a means as the one employed.

The three had halted several times to allow Lirrho to rest, for almost at the foot of the mountain the visible path had ceased, and their way, which now lay over rough, uneven ground, was indicated by landmarks undistinguishable by any but the priest. Even he frequently found difficulty in locating some point in the darkness, and such work was of necessity exhausting to a man who had just risen from his bed and whose broken bones could at the best be but feebly knit.

The first part of the journey was, however, nearly over. Lirrho climbed more slowly, stopping every few steps to examine trees and rocks with the most minute attention. At last he halted beneath a smooth, vine-covered ledge about half-way up the ascent. Nhar glanced inquiringly toward him, and then, in answer to an almost imperceptible nod, proceeded to draw the vines aside here and there, until finally, at the base of the rock, he disclosed a small circular orifice about two feet in diameter and evidently of artificial origin. Then, at another nod from the priest, the boy got down upon his hands and knees and proceeded to crawl through the aperture. Lirrho promptly followed, motioning to Vance to do likewise. In a few moments they stood upright, but in absolute darkness.

The priest now directed Nhar to light one of his torches. By its glare, Vance made out that they were standing in a narrow ravine about two feet wide, with smooth perpendicular sides of lava rock rising to a height of nearly ten feet. The top was covered with what seemed a thick net-work of vines, and the pathway was of solid lava carefully and laboriously levelled and evened off by human agency. In fact, all the surroundings impressed the American with the idea of man's workmanship. The passage was practically undiscoverable unless one should fall through some break in the vines that roofed it; and,



in this connection, it crossed his mind that the ravine where he had found Lirrhi might have been originally devoted to similar purposes—whatever these might be—until the ground above had caved in through some agitation connected with the volcanic phenomena that dominated nature in this mysterious region.

His thoughts were, however, quickly interrupted by a sharp whisper of Lirrhi's. Nhar at once extinguished his torch, and both seemed to listen intently. For a moment Vance could not detect the sound to which their more acute hearing was evidently keenly alive. Then he too caught the unmistakable fall of footsteps upon the lava, and soon a dim light, which gradually became brighter and brighter, seemed to pervade the dense gloom before them.

A few feet farther on, the path took a sharp turn, and beyond this the footfalls of the torch-bearer were now rapidly approaching. Lirrhi clutched Vance's arm.

"Your sword," he whispered, sharply. "Get close to the turn, and use it surely. There is but one of them."

Vance shuddered.

"Kill a man like that?" he murmured. "We call that murder."

"Call it what you please—afterward," said Lirrhi, impatiently, "but do not speak now. If he escapes, we and the girl are dead. That is all; and, remember, it is a priest, and one very close to her misfortunes."

Vance hesitated no longer, but, swinging his sword around from his back to his side, he drew it carefully from the scabbard and advanced cautiously to the point where the path turned. The next moment a priest bearing a flambeau stood within two feet of him, and he felt himself lunging with all his strength straight at the man's heart.

The harsh, grating sound of steel piercing through flesh and bone came to his ears, and, with it, a short stifled cry, beginning in surprise and running the gamut of terror and pain. The torch fell and was extinguished. He was conscious of wrenching his sword loose and thrusting again, even while his enemy was falling; but the first stroke had been true, and the priest uttered no further sound.

Trembling, and streaming with perspiration, the slayer stepped quickly over the body and hurried around the curve, that he might not see the corpse of the only man he had ever killed outside of fair fight. Nhar and Lirrhi had now come forward, and the former proceeded to relight his torch, while the latter knelt down and satisfied himself that the victim was really dead. Then they followed Vance to where he stood trying to realize whether his present feelings were like those that beset common murderers.

"There are eleven more," said Lirrhi, as he overtook the lieutenant, and Vance shuddered again at the ominous words. He found himself going so far as to hope that the rest of their enemies might be killed while defending themselves, even though victory should be imperilled by allowing them such an opportunity.

They pushed on very rapidly now along the ravine, that turned and twisted every few feet as though writhing in pain. At one point the light of Nhar's torch fell full upon Vance, who glanced involun-



tarily down at the great gout of blood that he knew disfigured his tunic. Yes, there it was, but showing less clearly against the red cloth than he had dreaded it would. It only glistened a little now, because it was wet. Soon it would dry and become black and caked and perhaps scale off in part. So his mind dwelt upon every scrap of minute detail that suggested itself, and wandered off into musings as to the probable reflections of a man to be hanged for murder, imagining himself the condemned felon.

Suddenly he stopped short in his progress. He had come face to face with a smooth wall of rock that transformed the path into a perfect cul-de-sac. The torch that Nhar was carrying close behind threw all its light upon the surface of this obstruction, but Vance looked in vain for any aperture through which to make good their advance.

The momentary chill that fell over him at this seeming check, which his first thought attributed to some convulsion connected with the eruption, soon gave place to returning confidence, for the face of Lirrho showed no surprise or indecision. He stepped close to the end wall and examined it carefully, while Nhar held the torch so as to give as much light as possible.

In a moment the priest motioned to Vance and pointed to a shadow on the stone which seemed, on close inspection, to be a very slight, almost imperceptible, indentation in the shape of a human hand.

"Place your palm and finger in the lines," he said, "and press evenly and steadily."

Vance did so, and at his second effort the result was startling. A portion of the rock several feet in height and breadth revolved slowly as on a pivot and disclosed cavernous depths beyond that seemed to lead straight into the very bowels of the mountain. Despite his excitement at this *dénouement*, he could but wonder at the nice adjustment that left not so much as a crack visible to the eye and yet permitted tons of solid rock to be moved by the mere pressure of a hand. The incident, however, served to startle him out of the morbid vein of thought which had seemed likely to cripple his energies at the very time when the call upon them was sure to be most pressing.

One by one the three entered the mountain, and, after swinging the door-block—if it might so be called—nearly back to its position, pursued their way along a sinuous passage, scarcely large enough for one man to advance erect, and with walls, floor, and ceiling cut out of solid lava. It was quite apparent to Vance, in spite of the irregularity of its course, that the general trend of their path was decidedly downward.

After they had progressed for some distance, Lirrho, who had once more taken the lead, halted and directed Nhar again to extinguish his torch. Then he advanced more slowly, stopping from time to time. Vance could feel that the priest was listening intently for some expected sound, and the knowledge that a new and probably decisive struggle was impending served to restore all needed coolness to his nerves and steadiness to his muscles.

At last, as Lirrho halted for the third or fourth time, the American became conscious that the intense gloom was not as densely black now

as it had been a moment since. He understood at once from the former experience that there must be light ahead, and with it probably more enemies to be destroyed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ONE MORE.

AFTER a moment of hesitation, Lirrho drew Nhar toward him and gave him some whispered direction. Vance could barely make out the two figures close together. Then the smaller parted from the other and disappeared in the direction of the light.

The moments dragged along like hours. No suspicion of a sound broke the awful stillness which the American could liken only to death and the grave. He knew that his senses were already become morbidly acute, and he found himself beginning almost to realize what had always seemed incomprehensible to him,—how moles and even worms could dwell in subterranean passages, burrowed as occasion might demand, and possess senses that would enable them to pursue their prey, escape from their enemies, and perform all the varied functions of animal life.

At last a faint sound came to his ears. Lirrho heard it too,—the sound of approaching footsteps: Nhar returning from his mission.

With a low warning lest he might be mistaken for an enemy, the boy glided forward like a shadow, and, coming close to the priest, whispered earnestly in his ear.

"There is a large chamber a short distance along the gallery," Lirrho repeated to Vance, in low tones. "Nhar tells me there are five men on guard there, but that two are sleeping."

"I hope there will be some fight in them," the American whispered. "Fighting is the life of killing, even more truly than competition is the life of trade."

Lirrho made no reply; but, though unable to see his face, Vance knew instinctively that it wore a look of surprise, less at his flippancy than at the reluctance of any one to deal with enemies in the safest, most expeditious, and most effective way.

Then, each with his hand upon the shoulder of the one before him, they crept cautiously forward, Nhar first, then Lirrho, and Vance bringing up the rear.

Gradually the light from the chamber ahead became clearer, as they approached, pausing every moment to listen.

"You are fortunate," whispered Lirrho. "Usually twelve priests are on guard at such a time. I do not know why Aroo has cut down the number to six."

He raised his hand, as Vance seemed about to answer, and immediately turned and motioned Nhar to lead on again.

At last the boy stopped just before a turn of the passage. Lirrho crawled forward, and, after glancing around the corner of rock, motioned to Vance to come to his side. A weird spectacle lay before their eyes.

About twenty feet beyond was a square chamber with high vaulted roof. Several torches, mounted in convenient niches, shed a fairly bright light over the interior, showing a dark passage opposite, which evidently led farther on into the mountain. In the centre of the room was a table of heavy black wood, at which were seated three priests, eating and drinking. Food and wine stood before them in abundance, and they spoke to each other in low tones which, while not expressing the hearty mirth of banqueters, carried with them an impression of the deep internal satisfaction of true gourmands. In the shadow two other figures could be made out, extended at full length upon pallets of dried grass and seemingly buried in slumber.

After a short survey of the situation, Lirrhi slowly drew his sword and Nhar followed his example. The latter's blade grated slightly against its scabbard: one of the men glanced up quickly. The three watchers drew back, scarcely daring to breathe.

The priest's suspicions were not seriously aroused, for he did not communicate them to his companions, but turned again to his refection. Lirrhi nevertheless allowed some minutes to pass before he moved a muscle. Then he motioned to Vance, pointing to his sword, and indicating his wish by drawing one hand very slowly through the other.

The American hesitated. He felt that it was time to use every force at his command, and that to enter into a hand-to-hand fight with but one sound man, a boy, and an invalid against five opponents was thrusting his comrades into altogether unnecessary peril. Then, too, the danger and excitement of it all tended to blunt finer feelings, and, under the circumstances, an attack from ambush seemed entirely justifiable. The chances were that, even then, there would be fair odds against them.

A look of surprise not unmingled with contempt had spread over Lirrhi's features as he noted the American's hesitation, but, paying no attention to its import, Vance drew one of his revolvers from his belt, and, motioning his companions aside, glided forward. They eyed him and his weapon with astonishment. In a moment he had stepped out into the passage, and, levelling the revolver full at the priest who had been most vigilant, fired.

It would have been hard to realize the terrible effect of the detonation, as it rang and rang again, as if through miles and miles of galleries,—now almost dying out, only to gather volume once more and roll back to their deafened ears. The smoke hung like a pall around the assailant, but he sprang through it and fired again.

The man he had aimed at had fallen at the first discharge and lay still. Another fell at the second, but almost immediately staggered to his feet again, when a third shot stretched him on the rocky floor.

Still the American continued to advance into the room, endeavoring as he did so to see through the smoke. He fired at what he took to be the form of the third feaster, still sitting at his place and apparently paralyzed with fear. Whether struck or not, the shot seemed to release the fellow from his bonds, for he sprang up with a yell, and, as if blinded, rushed straight toward his enemy. Vance felt rather than saw him coming, and the fifth and last chamber of the revolver was

discharged with the muzzle almost against the priest's body. The latter dropped like an ox and lay motionless.

By this time the din and the smoke and the smell of gunpowder, mingled with groans from one of the fallen men, had contributed to a scene which was nothing short of hellish. Vance half expected to find himself deserted by his companions, and he felt that, in such event, he could hardly blame them. It had been his intention to warn Lirrhi of the nature of his weapons as soon as he should be sufficiently sure of his faith to be positive that no occasion could arise when he might find it necessary to launch their unknown terrors against a false ally; but this certainty had not come until very recently, and then events had occurred so rapidly that the purpose had slipped his mind.

It was quickly evident, though, that these island priests were made of a sterner stuff than most savages, for, whatever might have been the effect produced upon Lirrhi and Nhar by the first shot, the last had scarcely been fired and its victim down, before Vance felt some one push by him from behind and glide forward into the cloud of smoke that filled the chamber.

He knew that it must be Nhar, and his knowledge was immediately confirmed, for an instant later Lirrhi was beside him and answered his look of inquiry with,—

"He has gone to find and kill the two who were sleeping—Ah!"

The sound of a short struggle came from the middle of the room, and then of a heavy body falling against and upsetting the table. The commotion disturbed the smoke, which circled around in strata and lifted somewhat. Then they saw that one of the sleeping men must have staggered to his feet, and, falling foul of Nhar, had been stabbed to death before he could realize what had happened.

The other could be dimly seen trying vainly to raise himself from his pallet, but apparently overcome with wine or some narcotic. Nhar, who hitherto had been unable quite to get his bearings in the smoke, saw him at the same instant and sprang toward him with sword dripping blood, but scarcely had he reached the side of this last enemy when a sudden uproar arose in the opposite passage, and five more priests rushed out into the room choking with its atmosphere of burnt gunpowder and littered with the bodies of their dead and dying companions.

Their mantles had been thrown aside, their swords were in their hands, and their shaven crowns shone oddly in the weird light. They paused a moment, as if to grasp the situation, clustering together at the entrance, and in that moment two things happened. Vance's second revolver had spoken and one of their number dropped, while Nhar, leaning over the prostrate figure on the pallet, had drawn his weapon quickly across the fellow's throat.

The courage of these men seemed to the American something phenomenal. Unterrified by the mysterious agency that had stricken down their comrades and was now striking at them, unmindful even of death within the sacred precincts, they had no sooner realized half blindly what had happened and noted Nhar's act than, with one accord, they rushed furiously toward him.

What followed was all in an instant. The boy turned to fly, and had reached the entrance of the passage where his friends were concealed, when he tripped over the body of the man whom Vance had shot last. Before he could regain his footing, his four pursuers were upon him, and he was literally stabbed to pieces by the swords that, in the blind fury of their wielders, wounded even allies by their frantic blows and thrusts.

During this sudden flight and pursuit, Vance had not dared to fire, for fear of hitting the fugitive, but as the latter fell both he and Lirrhi rushed forward from their hiding-place. The revolver poured its four remaining streaks of flame across the room as they advanced, but, what with the hurried aim and the smoke that settled after the first shot, only one more of the priests fell. Another had his arm broken; but of the effect of these shots the assailants knew nothing, when they plunged headlong into the clump of men who were still busy driving their weapons into the prostrate form of Nhar.

Then followed a confused *mêlée*, in which blows and thrusts were given blindly and received almost without being felt. The three priests were fortunately the greater sufferers by reason of this blindness. Utterly ignorant of the number of their assailants, and naturally despairing of escape, they lunged about in all directions with the frenzy of men bereft of their senses and swayed only by the animal instinct of fight.

Vance knew that he had run his sword through one man by the resistance to the thrust, and he knew the man had fallen by the weight upon its point as he drew the weapon back. Lirrhi had, perhaps fortunately for himself, come full against one of his enemies without seeing him in the smoke, and, still more fortunately, it happened to be the one whose arm had been broken. The man had dropped his sword from his right hand and was groping on the floor for it with his left, when his assailant literally fell over him. He received another slight wound from Lirrhi's sword, and then the two went down together, Lirrhi striving to shorten his blade for a new thrust, the other grasping at his enemy's throat with his sound hand and trying to choke him into insensibility.

Scarcely had Vance freed his weapon from the fellow before him when he heard a movement behind, and, at the same moment, felt himself pierced just back of his shoulder, but too high to do much harm. As he swung quickly around, his would-be slayer's sword caught sideways against shoulder-blade or clavicle and was wrenched from the hand that held it, while Vance, just as he wheeled, struck with all his strength a long, sweeping blow in the direction of his adversary. It reached the priest's neck and clove downward almost to his chest. He too was harmless.

The lieutenant, heedless of his wound, from which the weapon that inflicted it was still hanging, turned to look for his companion. As the smoke again began to lift, he made him out still struggling with his wounded enemy.

The latter was a powerful fellow, and, despite his injuries, had at last succeeded in getting uppermost. He was now endeavoring to



wrench Lirrhi's sword from his fast relaxing grasp. Vance sprang toward them, and, grasping the man by the throat, hurled him aside, fetching a cut at his head as he fell which laid open the skull. Lirrhi struggled to his feet.

It was several moments before they were able to see clearly the shambles in which they stood, but, as soon as the prostrate forms that lay strewn around them became distinguishable, Lirrhi proceeded to examine them one by one, turning them upon their backs and peering into their faces, distorted with the fury of combat and the death-agony. As he did so, one man opened his eyes and looked fixedly at him, and Vance, despite all the excitement and exhaustion, felt a new thrill of horror to see his companion deliberately draw his sword across the fellow's throat. Another, who groaned slightly, was treated in the same way, while the American leaned against the wall, too feeble to protest. This terrible inspection finished, Lirrhi rose and counted the bodies carefully.

"Ten," he said, and his brow contracted for a moment. "No, eleven," he added, after a pause. "I forgot the man you killed farther down the gallery. Well, there is one more."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE HEART OF TAO.

THERE was something in this announcement that seemed to save Vance from sinking in his tracks. The strain and physical exhaustion of the fight, superimposed upon nerves weakened by the deep anxiety of the last week, the knowledge that within a few minutes he had, with his own hand, killed nine men, not to mention the loss of blood, and the pain of his wound, which, now that the fighting was over, began to assert itself sharply, all combined to overwhelm him. Nothing but a consciousness that the work was still unfinished could have revived his fainting energies, but this consciousness proved most effective. He understood fully now just what the escape of a single man meant: that it meant the certainty of their being overpowered in the bowels of the earth, without a chance of escape, much less of success in their undertaking, whatever that might be. Nhar was dead, and both himself and Lirrhi were more or less disabled; while, as he mechanically reloaded his revolvers, he could not but feel that the moral effect of these weapons upon his adversaries had been practically worthless. They were good for half a dozen more lives, and that was about all.

The endurance of his companion, despite his injury and the rough handling he had received, was a source of astonishment to Vance only less than was the desperate courage of their enemies. Lirrhi seemed to have added nothing to his physical hurt in the struggle in which he had engaged, while his eyes and movements told of an undiminished store of nervous energy. He now busied himself in stanching the blood that still flowed from the lieutenant's shoulder and binding up the wound with strips of a dead priest's gown. This done, he seized

a new torch from a niche in the wall and proceeded to enter the opposite passage. Vance followed, having first taken the precaution to reinforce his strength with a deep draught of the wine, some of which still remained in one of the overturned flasks.

The gallery in which they now found themselves was similar to that from which they had entered the chamber of death; but its descent was far more precipitous. The air, too, seemed much denser, and was charged with gaseous exhalations very sulphurous and stifling,—a bad exchange for even the gunpowder-impregnated atmosphere they were leaving behind. If there was a terrestrial entrance to the infernal regions, Vance felt that this path would be a much more realistic candidate for its honors than any of those described in verse or fiction from the "*Æneid*" to "*Vathek*." Then he found himself smiling at the frivolity of his thoughts and wondering again at the proneness of the typical American, and more especially the American of the Middle States, to treat with an external flippancy emergencies which were really calling forth and absorbing his highest interest and energies. He had even begun to reason as to whether it might not be the result of some such overdraught on the nervous power as produces hysterics in women. Certainly it was not an affectation, however it might have the appearance of being such.

He was aroused from these irrelevant musings, which had served the purpose of resting him somewhat, by a sudden and sharp declivity in the path. For about two hundred feet they were obliged to descend very carefully. Then they came out upon a level floor of rock, circular in shape,—a sort of smaller chamber, but without the high vaulted roof which had made the former one noticeable. This room was no higher than the narrow passage that led into it. Its sides, too, were jagged and uneven, with corners of rock jutting here and there, as if it had been, for some reason, more hastily hewn out than the rest of the subterranean system.

The most remarkable feature of the place was, however, one that seemed to mark it as the termination of their path, for, on the farther side from the passage by which they had entered, Vance made out, instead of a new gallery or even a barrier of rock, a huge black pit, the depth of which he tried in vain to fathom. When, however, Lirrhi approached his torch close to the edge, the bottom of the abyss was visible not much more than twenty feet below the platform where they stood; but the descent was sheer and precipitous. The breadth of the chasm was not to be measured, for, though the gloom was illumined far ahead by the rays of the torch, there were yet blacker depths beyond.

He had only time to remark further and with some wonder that, from what he could see of the bottom and of the precipice that descended to it, the lava-rock that formed both was of a much later formation than any through which they had come, when Lirrhi grasped his arm and pointed to four bars of a metal that resembled bronze. These were affixed like levers close to the edge of the descent and near one side of the chamber. Three stood upright from the floor and were of moderate length, but the fourth, which projected horizontally from

the wall a little back of the others, was much longer and heavier, as though intended to exert a much greater power. Vance saw, too, that there seemed to have been some appliance for moving them which could be worked from a distance. There were broad perforated flanges in the ends of each, as if to receive certain heavy hooks, which he now noticed fastened to the ends of four ropes of woven metal which ran through holes in the wall behind him and were coiled neatly on the floor beneath.

He turned toward Lirrhi with an inquiring glance, and was astonished to observe that his companion seemed to be laboring under some strong agitation. His whole frame was trembling violently, and his dark face had become almost ashen in hue. All this and much more might have been looked for in any ordinary man, but Vance had, with good reason, come to regard the priest as altogether removed from most of the common emotions of humanity. The only time when he had appeared to show any feeling whatever was when expressing gratitude for his rescue from the ravine on the mountain; and the American felt instinctively that the present loss of self-control indicated some serious impending peril of which he himself was ignorant. He was by this time, however, fully renerved to go through whatever might lie before him, and waited calmly for the next instructions.

Meanwhile the eyes of Lirrhi roved furtively around the chamber. A look of absolute terror was evident in their dusky depths, but, after a few moments of hesitation, he seemed to recover something of his composure, and, again pointing to the levers, said, in a low voice,—

"Thrust them forward, one by one,—the small ones first. It is the last effort, and the most perilous. May your god give you strength to move the great one."

Without delay Vance set himself to accomplish the task imposed. The three small levers yielded with very little effort, and were, one by one, turned down level with the floor.

"Now the other! Quick! quick!" cried Lirrhi. "The gases are freed. The torrent must be turned under the sea."

Without realizing in the least the meaning of his companion's words, Vance threw his weight against the great bronze bar. He could not perceive that it moved even a hair's breadth. Lirrhi became almost frantic as he saw that the first effort was a failure.

"Again! again!" he shrieked. "All your strength! It is for three men, but you *must* move it. One hundred pulse-beats, and the death-vapors will be here, and we shall die."

Again Vance bent himself to the task with all the nervous force that the combined passions of love and fear could lend. Surely the bar seemed to stir slightly, and Lirrhi, who up to this point had been only holding the torch and urging his companion on, now rushed forward and laid his hand on the metal, as if to add his strength to the effort. Then suddenly he sprang back with a cry of warning.

Vance caught the words "The twelfth priest!" and, turning his head, he saw bounding toward him this sole survivor of the guardians of the mountain. The man's cloak had been thrown aside, and, with gleaming eyes, drawn blade, and red tunic, he seemed to the intruder's

startled gaze like the demon presiding over the pit to which they had so rashly penetrated. He had doubtless been hiding all the time behind some projection of the uneven walls.

Everything passed like a flash. When the eyes of the American first saw the peril, his enemy was already within four or five feet. Another spring would bring him upon him, and he could feel the sharp curling blade piercing his back and drawn across his throat. Instinctively he threw himself to one side, and so quickly that the body of the other was carried by its impetus full against the lever with so much force as to be completely doubled up across it.

Almost at the same moment, Vance, recovering his feet, sprang upon the fellow's back, and, having no time to draw sword or pistol, sought only by grasping the long bar with both hands to hold his assailant helpless over it until Lirrhi could return and cut his throat in the most effective manner. The result was one upon which he had far from calculated. The momentum of the two bodies, coming almost at the same moment upon the lever, seemed to supply the power which had been lacking to one alone. Creaking, it swung slowly around.

The effect was startling beyond anything that had yet happened. The whole mountain shuddered and rocked as if under the influence of some tremendous force, while a dull heavy roar like the rush and fall of a cataract of molten lead came rumbling to Vance's ears and increasing every instant in volume and nearness.

He half turned his head to see why Lirrhi was delaying so long to come to his rescue and release him from his awkward position. To his amazement and dismay, he saw that his companion, usually so cool and courageous, had turned, and, as if possessed by unreasoning terror, was scrambling wildly up the steep passage.

Left to his own resources and impressed with a sense of impending peril, though without realizing its nature, the American loosed his grasp upon the bar, and, raising the half-limp form of his prisoner in his arms, he swung him round and, with a violent effort, hurled him over into the abyss. One piercing shriek of indescribable fear and horror rang in his ears, high above the swelling din that surrounded him, and then, with every sense gone except the instinct of self-preservation, he turned and darted up the ascent in pursuit of the fleeing Lirrhi.

The latter had already disappeared, but the light of the torch which he still carried shone dimly along the gallery and indicated that he could not be far in advance.

Stumbling, recovering himself again, tearing his garments and even his flesh against projecting points of rock, Vance clambered and ran onward. It seemed ages before he could overtake the other. At last, as he reached the level, he caught sight of the priest struggling on ahead and staggering from side to side like a drunken man. A strong, suffocating odor began to permeate the dense air, while the roaring behind increased every second.

Vance now gained rapidly, but, at the moment when only a stride separated the two, Lirrhi stopped short, swayed in his tracks, and then sank slowly down, while his companion sprang forward just in time

to grasp the torch and save it from extinguishment. The priest turned upon him an eye glazed with terror, and gasped faintly,—

“Quick—the way we came, and out! No one can breathe it and live.”

Hardly knowing what he did, the American stooped down, and, picking up in his arms the now senseless form, resumed his flight. Everything was whirling in his brain. His hand still grasped the torch, but his eyes were blind to its light. At one time he became vaguely conscious that he was crossing the first chamber, where the combat had taken place. Twice he stumbled over dead men, and once almost came to the ground with his burden. Ghostly shrieks mingled with triumphant laughter assailed him, and he imagined that the hands of the corpses reached up and grasped his tunic and tried to drag him down among them, until he wrenched himself loose and pursued his way.

At another moment he found himself gravely doubting whether he too was not really dead and endeavoring to escape from some hell into which he had fallen, while, to add to his confusion, the torch, either by brushing against the wall or by being burned out, was suddenly extinguished.

How the remainder of the path was covered he never knew; but at last a narrow streak of light became visible,—light that in the outer world doubtless would have been called “darkness,” but which seemed brilliantly luminous amid the dense gloom of this subterranean gallery. For a moment his senses rallied. He was at the great revolving rock that had closed the entrance to the passage, and which they had fortunately not swung close.

Still the fugitive knew nothing of how to stir the mass from the inside, and could only hurl himself blindly against it.

Fortune came to his aid; for, whether it was that some part of his body pressed unknowingly upon the hidden lever or that the rock itself took pity upon his exhaustion, it yielded slowly, and Vance, still holding the inanimate form of Lirrhi in what was almost his own death-grasp, fell rather than passed through the widening aperture. Then he dropped like a log, and even instinct left him.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### MARSHALLED FOES.

To experience all the feelings of a violent death and yet to return to life is a knowledge not lacking to humanity, least of all to the soldier; but the scenes of blood and almost supernatural terror through which Vance had passed were of a nature far beyond the lines of even extraordinary suffering, and the collapse that followed them was utter and complete.

The first indication of returning consciousness that came to him was a sense of dull pain throbbing, throbbing in his shoulder and shooting thence, from time to time, through all the nerves of his body.



As he drifted slowly back from the dark world of nothingness, the pain increased until his lips were forced apart in a groan.

The effort seemed to arouse him still more. He opened his eyes, but a dazzling light made him close them again. He knew that his head rested on some one's knees. The bright glare burned through his closed lids. Gradually, as he became accustomed to it, it seemed to grow more dim, and at last he again ventured to look up. This attempt was attended with better success. He was now able to bear what he knew could only be the daylight, and that, too, filtered through the net-work of vines that covered the outer passage. Lirrhi's dark face and deep eyes, again inscrutable and expressionless, were above him; though it was hard to realize that the features were the same he had seen only a short time since contorted and blanched by succeeding waves of fury and terror. Perhaps they both were really dead, after all, he thought, and it was the priest's spirit that had resumed its calm.

The neck of a flask thrust between his teeth served, however, to dispel any illusion that clung to his gathering reason, and the draught soon restored him to the full knowledge that he was alive and suffering, as well as served to recall the memory of what had occurred, and, above all, of Zekah. Strength, too, came with that thought, such as no spirits could infuse.

"What has happened? Did we succeed? Is she safe?" he asked.

"There is more to be done," said Lirrhi, slowly.

Vance was on his feet in a moment. The nerves that had given out when the end seemed to have been attained resumed at once their stimulating power.

"Very well. I am ready," he said, shortly.

Lirrhi remained seated and viewed him curiously for a moment. An expression as closely akin to astonishment as the priest's face admitted of was apparent on his features, and Vance, following his companion's eyes, glanced down at himself.

It was then that he first realized to the full what had taken place. His tunic, the only garment he still retained, hung in tatters about him, and its rags were thick with earth-stains and caked with the blood of himself and his enemies. His priest's sword had been lost from his belt, but his own and his pistols were still safe. An impulse to laugh heartily at his condition and at that of Lirrhi, who was but little better off, was checked by a sharper twinge from the wounded shoulder,—a twinge that seemed to traverse his frame, stopping now and again to exchange compliments with the numerous minor cuts and bruises it encountered on its route.

"Can you travel and fight more?" his companion asked at last.

"You see I can stand," replied Vance, "and I think I can draw a trigger."

He glanced toward his revolvers, and Lirrhi, catching the inference, said,—

"You fight with the thunder and lightning. They are good weapons. Tao has not taught his chosen how to govern them."

An expression of cynical contempt shaded the speaker's face: Vance interpreted it to indicate what in civilization would be termed

an advanced condition of scepticism on the priest's part. Certainly he could hardly believe in a god against whom he consented to fight and whose apparent manifestations were so evidently the result of priestly chicanery. Still, it was evident that he was enough of a believer in something, to dread dying upon the mountain and to feel the strongest gratitude for being saved from that fate. Vance had not yet ceased to wonder at the courage of all these men when brought face to face with so mysterious an agency of destruction as gunpowder; though possibly he might have better comprehended Lirrhi's other attributes had he reflected how inconsistently scepticism and superstition are sometimes mingled in individuals of more enlightened races.

"Come," said Vance, finally, as he saw the other lapsing into deep thought, "you can count upon me to last as long as there is work to be done; but all the same it would be just as well to finish it as soon as possible. How about your side?" he added, after a pause, during which Lirrhi said nothing. "Has it received further hurt? Can you still count upon yourself?" The prospect of again carrying his companion rather shook his new confidence in his strength; and yet even in that contingency there would be nothing to do but to pursue his task until it or he were finished. He was quickly reassured on this point, however, for Lirrhi sprang to his feet with an agility which he himself could not have imitated.

"I think the bone has knit better in the last few hours," said the priest. "The bandages were well put on, and they are still in place. Do not fear but that I shall be strong as long as is necessary; we islanders are all trained to endure; but let me look at your wound first."

With skilful fingers, and rapidly, he made an examination.

"It is not so very bad," he said. "It will not disable you, if you do not mind the pain."

"That is nothing," replied Vance, with a grimace, as Lirrhi proceeded to work the shoulder-joint.

"You must be careful not to let it stiffen yet," he added. "No bone is hurt, and no great muscle divided. The blood, too, has ceased to flow. What did you do with the last priest?"

"I threw him into the chasm," said Vance.

Lirrhi shuddered.

"Ah!" he continued, after a pause. "He has journeyed to the ocean, then, in a coffin of lava. Let us go on."

They started down the ravine, and, whether the effort of motion or the renewal of nerve-force was responsible, Vance felt himself grow stronger with each step. He took occasion, too, to follow the good advice he had received as to moving the hurt shoulder, which he did, gritting his teeth together, and gently at first, so as not to reopen the wound. He soon found that Lirrhi had been right as to the nature of the injury, and by the time he had reached the entrance his left arm seemed almost as useful as his right. The soreness had abated, and only a slight exercise of will-power was necessary to render his whole body serviceable, if not sound.

Several times on the way he had made an effort to question his

companion and to obtain some definite notion of just what they had accomplished, how it had been done, and in what way it affected their ultimate aim. He was conscious of and still irritated somewhat by the fact that he had been used all along as a mere automaton, and had done nothing but obey orders blindly, kill when told to, and defend himself when attacked. Of course he was now fully assured of the priest's good faith, but he felt that his own efforts might have been and would still be much more efficient had he more than the vaguest idea of what might be their aim.

Lirrhi, however, had relapsed, if the term could be used of him, into his non-committal mood. In fact, he did not even seem to hear the questions addressed to him. Only when they had crawled again through the hole by which they had entered the ravine and stepped out several paces into the open ground, he laid his hand upon Vance's arm and pointed to the crater above them. Just a slender thread of vapor wound its way upward from the summit, to be lost in the blue vault above, without obscuring its deep azure by so much as the thinnest film. The eruption had ceased entirely.

Vance turned inquiringly toward the priest.

"That is our work thus far," said Lirrhi.

Without another word, he turned again and led the way down the descent.

Vance asked no further questions. He had learned that these were useless so far as procuring or even hastening information from his companion was concerned; and so they walked on in silence, though the active mind of the American was beginning, unaided, to conceive the almost inconceivable truth.

Upon reaching the level ground once more, the journey became easier. They again struck the broad, paved road leading to the city, and soon the glint of sunlight on its white walls gladdened their eyes. Unconsciously they walked faster, until at last they passed under the shadow of the gate through which they had set out on the evening before.

Vance noticed carelessly that the streets along which they were hurrying were almost deserted, and, from the curious glances which a few women whom they met bestowed upon his certainly startling appearance, he congratulated himself very heartily that most of the inhabitants were otherwise employed. Soon a low humming sound, as of many voices, came to their ears. The square was now but a short distance ahead. Evidently it was there that the people were assembled, and in greater numbers than ever.

Another corner was turned, and then the outskirts of the crowd appeared extending far down the street. It seemed impossible to penetrate farther. Lirrhi spoke to a man who stood with his back to them, trying illogically enough to look over the heads of those in front to where a corner of wall blotted out, even more effectively, whatever might be going on beyond.

"Will you tell me, friend, the cause of this commotion?"

The Karanian turned and surveyed them from head to foot in open-mouthed astonishment. At first glance he took them both to be priests

and in most desperate plight. Then his eyes fastened upon certain spots where blood or water had removed the dark stain from Vance's face and body or where it had been scraped off in the contact with man and rock.

"The stranger!" he ejaculated.

"But what are the people gathered for?" asked Lirrhi, again.

The man looked blankly at him.

"I do not know," he said. "I saw others running, and I followed."

"Tao is appeased," explained a by-stander who had been attracted by the conversation, "and Merrak and Aroo have summoned the people to give thanks. The maid must have died quickly."

"Nonsense!" cried another. "A man who ran by me said that Aroo had slain the Soveet."

The crowd was becoming more excited, and, as whispers passed from mouth to mouth, the angry feeling against the American, as the cause of their trouble, began to take form again, and threatening eyes were bent upon him from many sides. At the same moment a louder uproar came from the square in front.

"Listen!" cried Lirrhi, earnestly, addressing those nearest him. "I am a priest. This man is protected by Tao until Tao shall order him slain. Has not Aroo proclaimed as much? I have been ordered, even now, to bring him at once to where the Soveet and high-priest deliberate as to his fate. You see with what trouble I have secured him. Make way for Tao's captive! Make way!"

With an assumption of authority, he started to push through the crowd, whispering hurriedly in Vance's ear,—

"It is necessary for us to reach the Soveet at once."

Those around gave way sullenly at these words, and their glances toward the supposed prisoner became more hostile but less threatening. Farther on, however, the press grew denser, and new explanations had to be made at every step. Lirrhi was almost beginning to despair.

Then it was that a very timely manifestation of the speed with which a rumor makes its way through a crowd came to his rescue. A great murmur of voices in mingled tones of command and expostulation rose suddenly from the midst of the square and rolled nearer and nearer. Soon they could even make out by the increasing pressure that some commotion was going on ahead. The mass of human beings surged hither and thither, while a cry of "Make way for the Soveet's men!" could be distinguished now above the din.

It was evident that a party clothed with authority was forcing a passage through the throng and advancing slowly toward where the priest and Vance had almost ceased their efforts to make further headway. The two now awaited whatever was to develop.

It came quickly. First there was a wilder jostling and confusion: the struggle of those in front to get out of the way seemed to extend its influence all through the multitude, as a wave rolls over the ocean. At last the head of a company of nobles came in view, and, what with hoarse commands, sturdy pressure, and an occasional prick with their

sharp swords, it soon worked its way to the place where Lirrhi and his companion stood.

The officer in command eyed the adventurers with a look of indecision. At last he said,—

“Are you Lirrhi, the priest of Tao?”

Lirrhi bowed.

“And this man? Is he the stranger from the sea?” continued the officer, indicating Vance, but with even more hesitation.

“You have said the truth,” replied Lirrhi; “and he demands to be taken at once before the Soveet on a matter of high importance, that will admit of no delays.”

A sinister smile curled the Karanian’s bearded lips.

“I was sent to bring him,” he said, shortly. “Rumor ran that he was among the people. Let him pray his god that whatever other demands he may have shall be granted as readily as this one.”

He turned and addressed a few words to his followers, who proceeded at once to clear a space and to get Lirrhi and Vance in their midst. Then they began their journey back through the crowd, like a ship in the waves of a sea that close in upon her wake as fast as her prow dashes the water aside.

Meanwhile that part of the square directly in front of the Soveet’s house, and from which most of the noise had proceeded, became comparatively silent. It seemed as though the contending elements had subsided until the new-comers should appear upon the scene.

As they drew nearer, Vance saw that the terrace above the long steps was thronged back to the very palace gates with rank upon rank of the nobles, and several paces in advance of these he distinguished Merrak himself, seated upon a low throne. The building, too, appeared to be garrisoned, while the huge black temple near it frowned portentously. At last the party broke through the inner circle of the crowd and came out into an open space at the foot of the steps, which a large force of guards was with great difficulty keeping clear.

Aroo, surrounded by a score of his followers, stood in this area, facing the Soveet, who, supported as he was by armed men of his own race, looked calmly down at his rival. Close by the former was an officer who held in his hand a tablet such as Vance had seen Lirrhi affix to the post near the palace before setting out for the mountain.

As soon as they had come to a halt, the American shot a quick glance around the crowd, to draw, if possible, from the nearest faces an intimation of its temper and of the nature of the matters impending. He saw with some misgivings that the front ranks were composed entirely of priests, among whom the sentiments of anger and solicitude seemed to alternate. It was quite evident that they either had been or feared they were about to be attacked, if not in their persons, at least in their power and privileges.

The time for inspection was short. A look of satisfaction flashed across the Soveet’s face when he saw that his men had secured the persons sent for. Then, as his eyes rested for a moment upon Vance, he frowned heavily. At the same moment, Aroo turned, but whether his forbidding features expressed fear, hate, triumph, or all combined was



not easy to tell. Whatever the expression was, it passed as quickly as it came, and with calm brow he once more confronted the Soveet.

The latter now made a signal to the officer who held the tablet, and the man stepped forward and glanced inquiringly at his prince. Merrak spoke :

"In the presence now of accuser and accused, and before me and my people, let the charge be read."

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## CHAPTER XX.

### THE MASSACRE.

THE words of the Soveet could not have penetrated far, but the action of his secretary, for such he seemed to be, carried a fuller significance. A deep silence fell over the crowded square, as the latter proceeded to read in a loud, ringing voice,—

"I denounce and defy the false god, Tao, and Aroo, his priest, and all that obey him to make blood flow. Ere morning comes Tao shall bow to my power and return to his bonds while the maid is yet alive. Punish his followers who have deceived the people and conspired against thy race. So saith the stranger."

No outburst of anger followed this audacious charge; but, to an experienced man, the silence that continued to prevail was more threatening than the wildest uproar. It was probable that the vast multitude looked to see some vengeance so terrible fall upon the blasphemer that their indignation against his act was well-nigh lost in what was almost pity for his impending fate. Then, too, some doubtless were filled with consternation lest Tao, in his blind wrath, should confound the innocent with the guilty in one awful holocaust of fire and death.

Second after second passed in weird silence. The sky was still bright and clear, and the thread of vapor that had pencilled from Tao's mouth was now so faint as to be almost indiscernible. Perhaps, after all, the god would leave his vindication in the hands of his children, for at that moment Aroo's voice rose strident and menacing :

"In the name of Tao, I demand that the sacrilegious stranger be given up to be thrust into the mouth of the god whom he has blasphemed !"

Again there was silence. To the people it must have seemed that the high-priest was lax in his duty, to make so mild a claim. The affair would end in an anticlimax after all.

As for Vance, he was rather disposed to think that his last hour had come. He began to consider seriously whether he should not at once empty all the chambers of one revolver into Aroo's body and thus insure the punishment of the arch-villain, rather than attempt a personal defence which must be hopeless. The Soveet finally broke the silence.

"Let the stranger speak for himself," he said.

Aroo sprang forward. His composure was gone, and his dark face flamed with passion. Raising his hand, he cried out,—

"You will hear him? You will permit him to re-utter the blasphemies you have already listened to? Take warning! Tao has borne long, but there will be an end of forbearance."

The Soveet seemed to vacillate. His eye wandered from the high-priest to Vance, and then over the sea of faces that, still silent and intent, waited anxiously to see and hear the end.

"Has not the stranger fulfilled his promise, O Soveet?"

These words, spoken by a voice which had till then been unheard, came like an electric shock to the tense-drawn nerves of all. The speaker was Lirrhi, and he now advanced toward the throne and stood with arms folded across his chest and eyes fixed upon the Soveet's face, until it seemed to color slowly under the set gaze.

Among the crowd, both of nobles upon and above the steps and of priests and people below in the square, the effect was universal. Instinctively every man turned his head in the direction of the mountain. Then a confused murmur, gathering slowly in volume, rose, as if to relieve the situation. Still, though the words of Lirrhi, uttered at such a time and enforced by such ocular evidence, produced of necessity a deep impression, the revulsion of feeling seemed by no means general. The powers of superstition were not to be so easily overthrown, and the priests in particular pressed closer upon the open space, and, with threatening faces and gestures, began slowly to force the guards back toward the steps.

Upon Aroo himself, however, the effect of Lirrhi's words was most startling. For a moment he gazed in dumb astonishment at this assault from a presumably friendly quarter. Then, as his mind grasped the import and realized the inevitable influence of such a speech, a glimmer of the truth as to what must have happened and through what agency seemed to come across his mind. Instantly every vestige of calm and self-control left him. Hatred and fear made his face seem almost demoniacal. His sword flashed from his belt, and, screaming the single word "Traitor!" he sprang, like a cat, upon the man who had deserted his caste.

Lirrhi and those around him stood as if paralyzed by the sudden onslaught. Then came the blinding flash and ring of a pistol-shot. A cloud hung over the open space. Shrieks and groans resounded through the square, and many covered their faces. Tao had at last smitten the impious stranger, and they waited till he should be pleased to claim such other victims as might appease his wrath. Above all were evident the stolid resignation and fatalistic calm of the islanders. No one in the square dreamed of escaping. Had such an impulse gained sway, thousands would have been crushed to death; but the situation was to their minds simply this: Their god was angry; he would slay whom he willed, and they could not escape him: therefore they abided his pleasure.

In a moment more the breeze had swept the smoke away, and those who ventured to look saw a spectacle to them incomprehensible. Lirrhi stood there unharmed. The impious foreigner whom they themselves had seen enveloped in the fire hurled down to destroy him stood by the priest's side with a small piece of metal, still smoking

faintly, in his hand ; while writhing upon the ground directly at their feet was the all-powerful Aroo, the favorite son of Tao.

The mass of nobles upon the steps had, in the moment of terror, given evidence of their different lineage from the people. Many of them had sought to escape, and much confusion prevailed in their ranks. Finally, however, those who were unwilling to desert their monarch, and those who were able to realize the fatality which a panic would induce, regained the ascendancy ; especially when it was observed that the destroyer had stayed his hand.

What had happened was certainly most strange. Aroo was struggling to rise. He had been shot through the body, and his face was contorted with agony, through which still shone hatred and unconquerable will. Once he gained his knees, only to sink back. Vance watched him with set eyes. Suddenly, by a frightful effort, the high-priest struggled to his feet, swaying to and fro for an instant. A steely glitter was in his eye, and he lowered his head like a wounded bull about to charge. Lirrhi's gaze was fixed upon Vance with all the intensity of a hypnotizer's, and the latter, scarce conscious of what he was doing, raised the pistol again, placed it almost against his enemy's breast, and fired. Aroo dropped in a heap, and, after one or two convulsive shudders, lay still. Lirrhi's pent-up feelings burst forth in a deep sigh ; while Vance looked vacantly around him like a man just awakened from slumber. Then his eyes fell upon the corpse and wandered to the smoking pistol. His face grew firm and determined, and he turned defiantly toward the crowd.

The second shot, while fully justified by the set intent and probable ability of Aroo to effect harm, the futility of any attempt to evade him in the small space, and the helplessness or unwillingness of those around to restrain the wounded man's fury, was nevertheless, in one sense, unfortunate. It made perfectly apparent Vance's agency in what most of the people had before believed to be the stroke of some mysterious power. At once the priests began to throng tumultuously forward, brandishing their swords and forcing the guards before them by the tremendous pressure of the mass behind.

Vance and Lirrhi backed slowly toward the steps, and, ascending, pushed their way into the front rank of the nobles, who stood uncertain what to do and waiting for some word from the Soveet, who seemed to be entirely stunned by what had taken place.

At length, when the priest-led mob had already mounted the first step and the guards were being crowded back upon the main body of their fellows, Lirrhi's voice rose again above the uproar, that had been rapidly gaining strength and volume. Having worked his way to where the Soveet sat with head sunk upon his breast, he cried out,—

"Let the people pause and listen."

For a moment the noise and confusion subsided.

"Have I permission to speak?" he continued, addressing Merrak.

The latter bowed his head, and said, in a low voice,—

"Yes, yes ; speak to them."

"To them and to you," shouted Lirrhi, at the same time turning and facing the square, "that all may know how the stranger has over-

thrown the impostors. He saved me from death, and therefore have I aided him against a murderer and disclosed all the evil of which I had learned the secret. Let those who believe that it was Tao's wrath which caused the mountain to flame and thunder know now that it was only that of Aroo and those who preceded him——"

A terrible uproar arose among the priests at these words. Some tried to drown the accusing voice with wild cries; others endeavored to break through the guard, which, now supported by the throng upon the steps, could be forced no farther and presented a solidly packed front. Then, too, the people in the square had been listening with a dazed look upon their faces. They no longer supplied the weight of their dense mass to back up the forward movement of the priests. Had they done so, it must have been irresistible, and the square would soon have been piled high with the bodies of men suffocated or crushed to death.

"It was Aroo that longed for the death of the Soveet's daughter," continued Lirrhi, raising his voice above the noises that contended against it, "Aroo and those favorite sons of Tao who went before him, and who, to humble and keep down the power of the men from the sea, devised the sacrifice and bored their galleries into Tao's bosom and wrought cunning mechanisms by which the explosive gases might be restrained and let loose at will, and the fire-streams turned under the ocean or hurled high in air and rolled down upon the country."

For a moment the square had been almost silent, as if the outburst of sound was pausing to gather headway that it might overwhelm these terrible revelations; but meanwhile a glimmer of the import of what he had heard seemed to pierce the Soveet's brain, and, with it, a sudden consciousness of its truth. To many of those around him came a similar conviction, as is often the case in a crowd that listens, open-mouthed, until in an instant a thought darts through its utmost confines, reaching by some subtle man-to-man influence even those who have not heard the words that may have carried that thought to the few who grasped it at first hand.

As if inspired with all the quick resolve and activity of youth, the prince who had been so feeble and vacillating before the dread of an unseen power sprang from his seat and cried out,—

"Let every son of Tao be secured!"

Some of the priests, farther-sighted or more timid than the rest, had taken advantage of the time during which these events had been occurring to work their way back into the crowd; but the great majority, confident in the strength of their prestige and never dreaming that matters would assume a really dangerous phase for them as a caste, had been violent and aggressive up to the very moment of the Soveet's command. Then, all at once, they realized their peril. In the square the nobles outnumbered them five to one; but the black temple was held by a strong garrison, and the mountain with its heights and honey-combed depths offered a refuge from which a long defence might be maintained.

The trouble was that between them and both mountain and temple was packed a dense mass of human beings which ordinarily would be

unable to empty itself out of the square for an hour at least. There seemed to be but one chance.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, the islanders of the native race were, by ancient laws, forbidden to bear arms. Years since, during the constantly onward march of priestly encroachments, this right had been conceded to the priesthood; and, as Vance learned later, at the very time of the landing Aroo had almost brought to a head certain schemes of his own which would have resulted in the disarming of the nobles, leaving his followers the only persons on the island capable of prompt attack or defence. He had hardly reckoned upon accomplishing this final stroke without violence, but for that he had about prepared himself, when the coming of the Falcon had compelled him to postpone his *coup*.

Had the common people been armed, it would perhaps have been a question as to which side would have gained their assistance,—whether racial kinship or sense of justice would have prevailed. Probably, in view of the facts that not one man in fifty had heard or seen what had taken place, and that to most of those who had heard no clear comprehension of it all was possible, the priesthood could have counted pretty confidently upon the support of an armed mob.

This fact their leaders knew; but then the mob was *not* armed. It could be of little or no assistance. They must escape from the trap in which they were caught, and the only path was through the people.

By a system of sign-orders cunningly devised by Aroo as a part of the machinery to gain his ambitious ends, the whole body of priests was suddenly concentrated, faced about, and then hurled with terrific force upon the crowd. All this passed before the nobles had formed in sufficient force to execute the Soveet's command,—by no means an easy one at best.

Under the impact of so solid a mass, locked together in close order and presenting, as far as possible, a wedge-like front, the people were hurled aside, thrown down and trampled under-foot, or forced back crushed and gasping. Even the swords were used to prick into more active coöperation those who were slower to give way; for the priestly leaders doubtless reasoned that if the crowd could be made to trample and crush itself to death, they and their followers could escape with greater speed and less wear and tear.

For a few moments these tactics seemed likely to prevail. The weight, solidity, and formation of the assailing ranks carried them at first far into the square, as a rifle-bullet would pierce a bank of loose sand. A panic, too, very naturally prevailed, and no man was in their path who did not endeavor vigorously to escape and make way for the human battering-ram that assailed him and his fellows.

But neither inclination, fear, nor force was sufficient to overcome for long the helpless resistance of a great body of men packed in a circumscribed space. There were those far in the rear to whom sufficient speed could not be communicated rapidly enough, and whose movements, even when made, were almost as likely to impede as to expedite the opening of the way sought.

Soon the column of fugitives, like the same rifle-ball shot into the



sand-bank, found itself brought to a stand. Then, furious at the opposition, involuntary though it was, and reckless of the fate of friends or foes, those in the front rank began to use their swords in earnest, and were soon clambering onward over heaps of bleeding corpses.

The people had submitted with their usual stolidity to be crushed and trampled to death by their spiritual guides. Doubtless even good will had had as much to do with their readiness to clear a way as had the violence with which that way had been demanded; but now, with weapons gleaming before their eyes and being plunged again and again into the bosoms of neighbors and friends, wrath and despair took the place of submission and terror. They turned savagely upon their assailants; they clung to their raised arms; they wound themselves about their feet, and brought them down in that press to fall beneath which meant never to arise; they sought to choke them with their strong, nervous hands; they thrust their fingers into their eyes, tore their faces with their nails, and tried to bite them. Many fell; but slaughter itself becomes exhausting in time, and then, the greater the piles of corpses, the more effort to clamber over them. The onward impetus of the column was at last checked, and at the same moment the nobles, regaining their presence of mind and urged on by the now impetuous Merrak, poured down from the terrace and fell furiously upon its rear.

Then followed a scene too bloody to admit of description. Making prisoners was no longer thought of. The sight and smell of slaughter had driven away any such mild intention; and, besides, there were years of political encroachment to be avenged, years of presumptuous insolence from inferiors, which must be washed away in crimson waves.

The priests were now packed so closely by the pressure on all sides that it had become almost impossible for them to use their swords, much less for the rearmost ranks to face about against their enemies. It was a double massacre, rather than a battle. The priests slew the unarmed populace, the nobles slew the equally helpless priests.

To Vance, the weirdest feature of it all was the silence with which the terrible work was accomplished. A few shouts were uttered by the assailing nobles, but from these strangely stoical islanders not a shriek told of their sufferings. Even the groans of the wounded and dying were stifled so long as consciousness remained, and the most definite sound that he heard—a sound that grated in his ears long after that day—was the noise of the swords cutting and thrusting through flesh and bone.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE HOUSE OF TAO.

WHILE Vance's eyes were fastened in horror upon the awful work going on before them, he became suddenly conscious of some one calling his name as if from a great distance. Thus summoned to himself, he glanced around. The last of the nobles had already swept by the spot where he stood. He was alone, except for the corpse of Aroo, which

lay almost at his feet, and for Lirrhi, who had sunk down upon the steps, in a condition of utter collapse. It was the latter who had just spoken, but in a voice so weak as hardly to attract his companion's attention.

Stepping quickly to the side of the priest, he half raised him in his arms and peered anxiously into his face. It was very pale, but the eyes still shone. With an effort, he brought his lips close to Vance's ear and whispered, slowly but distinctly,—

"Hurry! Do you not know? The house of Tao! They will have gone there."

Vance started, as the meaning flashed upon him. Some of the priests must have doubtless escaped, and such would naturally make their way as quickly as possible to tell their tale to those who guarded the princess. He shuddered to think of the prompt and certain result of their vengeance and fury.

Still, he could not bring himself to desert his apparently dying friend, more especially as the priestly garb alone would at such a time be sure to expose the man wearing it to every indignity at the hands of the triumphant nobles. Lirrhi noticed the hesitation and guessed its cause. A smile crossed his features, and, with a new effort, he said, in a louder voice,—

"I tell you, you must hasten, or she is lost. I am well,—only exhausted. I shall live."

At that moment Vance saw a man in the dress of a noble hurrying from the door of the palace; and as he came near the lieutenant recognized the face of Esbal, and called out to him. The grim mariner of the galley stopped suddenly at the sound of his name, and approached the spot where Vance stood. The latter pointed to Lirrhi, who had sunk back upon the steps, and said,—

"Get the women from the palace to attend to him, and guard his safety with your life. It is the Soveet's order."

Then, without giving the other an opportunity to reply or question, and surmising that he would not be likely to take the risk of disobeying so simple a command, the American turned away, and, bounding down to where the rearmost ranks of the nobles were pressing onward after their fellows, he shouted,—

"Follow me! To the princess!"

A score of men halted, and, turning, eyed him curiously. Then his meaning seemed to flash through the minds of some of them, and as he ran swiftly along the base of the terrace a dozen armed followers gathered at his heels. Casting one backward glance to where he had left Lirrhi, he saw that Esbal had taken the priest in his arms and was mounting the steps; and then, his mind relieved of at least one of its troubles, he plunged into a side street, followed closely by his band of volunteers.

Gradually the noise of combat grew fainter, until, by the time they had reached the gate, there was nothing to indicate that the people were busied otherwise than about their customary callings.

Vance at once struck the road that led through the plantations and villas toward the heights overshadowing the city. The clouds floated

lazily across the sky; the birds flitted from spray to spray, and chirped and sang of everything except war and slaughter. Even such rustics as had not been unfortunate enough to go to town ceased from their work and looked in wonder at the company of armed men who, with bent bodies and set faces, ran silently by. One fellow alone seemed to grasp the situation.

"You will have to run fast to catch them," he cried. "They are both naked."

"Who?" shouted Vance, as he passed.

"The thieves, to be sure," replied the other.

Evidently at least two priests were in advance and had thrown aside their garments that they might move more swiftly, while the peasant had surmised from Vance's torn and bloody appearance that he had been set upon by thieves of whom he was now leading soldiers in pursuit.

Since his first cry for help, no word had passed between the American and his followers. Once suggested, the situation was perfectly apparent to all; and the receipt of this new and most disquieting information only caused them to draw their breath more deeply and increase their speed. If the fleeing messengers reached the house of Tao before them, there would be little room to hope; but then, on the other hand, the fellows could not know that they were so closely tracked, and there was a chance that they might not exert themselves to the full.

And now the heights were gained, the cultivated ground was left behind, and the pursuers found themselves running in Indian file along the narrow wood-path by which their leader had first gained the mountain. More than half the distance from the clearing to their destination must have been covered, when a sudden turn brought them in view of the quarry,—two priests, with all their clothing and arms thrown aside, running about twenty yards ahead.

Almost before the men had grasped the fact that enemies were nearly upon them, Vance drew a pistol and fired. The ball must have gone wide, and one of the priests bounded forward with increased speed. The other, however, slackened his pace for a moment and cast a frightened glance over his shoulder. The action was fatal. Again the pistol cracked, and this time with some effect, for the fellow began to limp as he ran. Then his legs seemed to give way under him, and he stumbled and fell.

Vance sprang over his prostrate victim and dashed on in pursuit of the other; but the lust of blood was upon him now in its full force, and it was with a feeling of distinct satisfaction that he understood, without even looking back, that the first of his followers had halted long enough to run his sword several times through the body of the wounded man. His mind was thoroughly awake, and his body seemed as strong and active as if the preceding night had been spent comfortably in bed instead of in giving and receiving wounds and in deadly combat with the most terrible forces of nature. One thing now struck him forcibly, as, pistol in hand, he watched eagerly for a glimpse of the other messenger through the foliage. It certainly would never do for his whole following to maintain their present speed and

come weary and winded to a combat with thirty fresh enemies. The man they were chasing was unarmed, and to deal with him such a force was entirely unnecessary. Turning as he ran, he cried out,—

"Let the two swiftest follow me, and the rest come slower and spare themselves."

A moment later he saw that the order or suggestion had been understood and practically obeyed. Only three of the Karanians were now close at his heels. The others had fallen back and were following more leisurely.

For the leaders, however, there was no respite. It was Vance's nerve-force that was setting the pace for his exhausted body and refusing him even the knowledge that he was tired. Still, he was not gaining ground; nor, for that matter, was he losing it. Several times he caught the glint of a naked brown body bounding some distance ahead, but each time ere he could raise his pistol to take aim its mark was again covered by the low-hanging foliage. Meanwhile he felt there could be little distance left between them and the end of the course, and then!—well, he could only urge his muscles to renewed effort.

Suddenly the woods seemed to become thinner; the clearing loomed up ahead, and Vance saw the fleeing priest about ten strides in advance running swiftly toward a group of armed men with red tunics and black mantles who were clustered before the house of Tao. To stop short and raise his pistol was the work of an instant. He covered his man and aimed low and carefully. Then he fired, and a second later had the satisfaction of seeing the fellow pitch forward and roll on the ground almost at the feet of the thirty guards, who gazed dumbly at the scene, but with more of astonishment than terror in their grim faces.

Vance had only time to dart back among the trees and begin to load the empty chambers of his revolver, when he heard the messenger, who, as misfortune would have it, had been only desperately wounded, screaming something in the island language to those gathered around him. At first they hesitated and looked wonderingly at each other, as if the information received was incredible; but a moment later one of the band identified the wounded man as a member of their own caste. They had not, however, recognized the pursuer, whose stained skin and dress, or what was left of it, had seemed, in the moment during which he had been visible, to mark him also for a priest. It was all incomprehensible to them, and they feared some snare. A fresh torrent of words, gasped and groaned out by the dying Karanian, finally dispelled their doubts, and cries of grief and rage resounded through the forest. Several knelt beside the prostrate figure; some started toward the point where Vance had disappeared; while others again drew back toward the house and eyed the winding stairway that ran up to the roof.

These last the American watched closely, fully realizing that every instant of indecision on their part was vital to his success. Only three panting and exhausted men were with him,—a hopeless force with which to attack thirty guards; and the moments of delay served to bring his nine remaining followers nearer to the spot where the last decisive conflict must take place. Some such idea as this seemed also

to come to the wounded priest, for he again screamed out several words, the effect of which upon his hearers was electric. Almost with one accord, they turned and hurried toward the stairway.

There was no room now for further inaction. Vance sprang from his cover and rushed forward, while his three tired companions followed, evidently prepared to stand by him bravely.

There were two courses that offered themselves: one, to try to cut their way through the crowd and gain and hold the ascent until the arrival of the rest of his men; the other, to stand back and pick off the priests, one by one, as they mounted to the roof. The former seemed absolutely hopeless, the latter nearly so. Realizing this, he called out to his fellows to halt, and two heard him and obeyed wonderingly. The third, now fighting mad, kept right on and plunged among the black robes, cutting and thrusting right and left until he fell beneath a dozen wounds, after killing one of the enemy and wounding a couple more.

Meanwhile Vance had fired twice with deliberate aim, and each time the leader of the line that had already commenced to ascend the stairs rolled off to the ground. The two nobles eyed his work with undisguised admiration, and, divining the purpose and wisdom of his course, prepared quietly to defend him against the ten or twelve men who now rushed toward the spot whence this fiery destruction issued. To these latter the American could give no heed. The would-be murderers upon the steps demanded all his attention.

One of his revolvers was now empty, but only one of its shots had been wasted. He thrust it mechanically into his belt and drew the other. By this time both of his defenders were down, and only three of their assailants had fallen with them, while the survivors of the latter sprang at him with their swords dripping blood.

He was conscious of a momentary hesitation as to whether to fire in defence of himself or to continue his practice upon those mounting the house. Then the stream of flame shot from the levelled barrel, and another man tumbled off the stairway. As Vance drew one long quick breath in full expectation that the brandished swords would make it his last, the clash of weapons sounded in his ears, and he found himself wondering vaguely how he came to be still alive.

The explanation was apparent, though. The rest of his followers had arrived, and a surging mass of fighting men writhed before him like a tangle of huge serpents. His eyes again sought the stairway, and he started to see that it was unoccupied. Surely no one could have gained the top! As many as were still mounting must be now climbing that part of the spiral that lay upon the other side of the house.

He had scarcely jumped to this conclusion when its truth became evident. A man's head and shoulders rose above the roof, and then an entire figure, but only to fall back at the discharge of the revolver. Another and another fell. Vance's hand seemed as steady as though it were a bar of iron. But one charge remained now in the cylinder, and as still another dark figure appeared and sprang toward the centre platform, he levelled his weapon for the last time and fired.



The fellow was undoubtedly hit, for he reeled and staggered a moment and then either fell or sprang down into the interior of the building.

Vance waited no longer. Hurling the empty revolver upon the ground, he drew his sword and darted toward the house of Tao, cutting down a priest who attempted to bar his way. The rest of his adversaries were too busily employed to notice, much less to stop him, but one of his own men succeeded in disentangling himself from the *mêlée* and followed. Gaining the house, the American bounded up the winding stairs. In a moment he was upon the roof, and then, without waiting to look, swung himself through the aperture and dropped to the floor. He felt his exhausted legs yield under him; and, as he tumbled in a heap, he was vaguely conscious of a sword-point thrusting straight at his heart. Instinctively he threw up his hand and caught the descending arm. Grappling now with this last antagonist, he groped blindly for his own sword, which had fallen from his grasp, when suddenly a sharp cry of warning came from above. The mist seemed to pass from before his eyes; and he knew that it was Zekah herself with whom he was struggling.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### BESIEGED IN TURN.

GRADUALLY Vance's eyes accustomed themselves to the dim light. He saw the form of the priest he had last shot lying beside him stone-dead, and realized that the girl, mistaking himself in his disguise for another of her enemies, had endeavored to defend herself against him with the sword of the first comer.

Even now it must have been far from easy to recognize in the battered and stained figure at her feet the stranger who had spoken the words she had been taught she must never hear; but, as the glow of recognition passed slowly across her face, paler somewhat than when Vance had seen it last, but with its perfect outlines unmarred, her slender form swayed slightly.

A man's strength must be very far spent when such a situation does not arouse him to a realization of its demands, and Richard Vance had not yet reached that state of exhaustion. He managed to struggle to his feet in time to catch Zekah in his arms, now almost fainting from the sudden revulsion of feeling, and to crush her to his bosom with a strength he would not have believed himself to possess.

"Why did you not obey me, my beloved?" she murmured; and even to Vance's jaded faculties enough of reason remained for him to know that kisses were the most appropriate answers to such very feminine interrogatories. For a few moments he seemed to himself to be wrapped in some wild dream inspired by the black smoke of the East. The gorgeousness of his surroundings, the dark face of the dead man at his feet, and the Oriental perfection of beauty in his arms, were like the phantasms of an Arabian Night.

But there was little time to surrender himself to the soft voluptuousness that threatened to steal away his senses. For a minute—and probably all that had happened since his entering the house of Tao had not occupied more than that time—he had been entirely unconscious of the noises of the combat raging without, and now he was first recalled to himself by their sudden cessation. Then he heard the same voice that had so opportunely prevented either himself or Zekah from dying by the hand of the other, and, glancing up to the circular orifice above, saw the bearded face of the noble who had followed him to the roof. The man's words were simple and ominous:

"All our men are down, and there are four of the priests left. I, Sirom, will defend the stairway."

Vance saw at once the peril which still surrounded him, trapped as he was in a place whence there was no possible chance of escape and where he could do nothing but wait to be released by a friend or have his throat cut by an enemy. He could hardly blame himself for his descent, for he had been necessarily ignorant of the condition of the priest who had dropped through the roof-entrance; but he bitterly regretted that he had thrown away one of his revolvers. As it stood now, there was nothing to do but to reload the one he still had, and, seating himself, with Zekah at his feet, to listen to the struggle of his last ally to maintain his post.

As for the girl herself, no one could have been more oblivious that aught was occurring which could threaten their safety or joy. With hands clasped over his knee, she seemed to fix her long, liquid eyes on his, like some beautiful and beneficent serpent seeking to charm away all thoughts that could interfere with perfect gladness. The attitude, the face, the nimbus of soul and sense and perfume that surrounded her, would alone have proved the Karanians to be an Oriental race, had all other evidence been lacking.

And now the sounds of new combat without waxed ominous. The prisoner could hear, first, the rush of feet up the stairway; then a momentary scuffle at some point of the circumference, followed by a short gasp and the thud of a body falling to the grass. Four times the same succession of noises was repeated, and not a word or shout had been uttered. A moment later the face of Sirom again appeared at the orifice.

"They are dead, my lord," he said, quietly, "and I am but little hurt. A cut in the leg,—that is all."

"Thank God!" cried Vance, in his native tongue. Then he continued in his jargon of Hebrew, Phœnician, and Karanian, "And now, if you can help us out of this hole, I will attend to your wound, and——"

"May Tao save us!" cried out Sirom, suddenly. "Here are at least fifty priests escaped from the square or the temple."

Again he withdrew from the opening. Vance heard the hum of voices and the tread of feet hurrying from the woods. Then a shout rose, doubtless as their eyes fell upon Sirom, and almost immediately after came a new rush up and around the stairway, followed by the thud of falling bodies that told of a well-maintained defence.

A few moments passed thus, and at last the tide seemed to recede ; but, before Vance could wonder how Sirom had been able alone to repulse so great a force, he heard a sharp crack as of a small stone striking against masonry, and then a shower of similar missiles seemed to fall upon the roof. The next instant the orifice above was darkened, and their champion swung himself through it and dropped to the floor. He was bleeding badly from a deep gash just below the knee, and his left arm hung helpless by his side.

"They are using their baleri," he said. "A stone broke my arm. It is impossible to hold the top any longer."

It flashed across Vance's mind even in this new emergency that by "baleri" the Karanian must mean slings, and that the slingers of the Balearic Islands had been famous among the mercenaries who served Carthage ; but such wandering thoughts were quickly recalled and his brain bent to a contemplation of the danger that confronted them. Still, in spite of it all, he found himself actually becoming calmer and more confident. The successful outcome of all the seemingly unavertible perils through which his hopes had passed had given birth to a sort of fatalistic assurance that, threaten what might, the result must yet in some way be fortunate.

The time, however, for reflections of any kind was short ; for before even an opportunity was afforded to examine Sirom's injuries there came again to their ears the sound of many feet circling the wall and gliding upward. They had scarcely drawn back to one side when a face peered through the aperture. Vance fired, and the head drooped and hung over with the blood dripping from it onto the floor below. Zekah covered her eyes.

There was an instant's delay above, just time to allow Vance to reload the empty chamber of his revolver, and then the ghastly spectacle disappeared, as the body was drawn back to make room for another man, who now proceeded to swing himself over the edge with his hands. Another shot rang out before he had had time to release his hold, and he came down in a writhing heap. Three more followed him in quick succession, and only the last succeeded in reaching the bottom before being pierced by the lead.

The revolver was now empty, and a pile of dead and dying men cumbered the floor in the middle of the room, while the smoke choked the lungs of the living and floated slowly up through its single outlet. But one of their besiegers had reached the bottom in a condition to be dangerous, and Sirom had managed to despatch him before he could gain his feet.

Then the attack was renewed, but from this on Vance was compelled to depend upon his sword and that of his injured companion. It was fortunate for them that the hole in the roof would not admit more than one enemy at a time. The drop, too, was of sufficient height to stagger a man, especially when he landed unexpectedly upon a writhing mass of human bodies ; and, whether he slipped or staggered or fell, there was always a defenceless instant in which a well-directed blow or thrust served to bring him down. Then Sirom's sword soon rendered him sufficiently harmless.

Still, even with these advantages, the contest could hardly be kept up forever. The assailants seemed absolutely reckless, the sword-arms of the garrison were fast becoming weary, and their weapons dull, while the very corpses of their enemies promised soon to overwhelm them or at least to rise so high as to admit of the others stepping down instead of jumping.

But just at this point the attack stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and Vance seized the respite to drag some of the dead and wounded to one side, so as to make room for more. Every moment gave breath to his lungs and strength to his muscles. He had again reloaded his revolver. A glance backward showed him that Sirom had at last fainted from loss of blood, and that Zekah was engaged in binding up his wounds as well as she could with cloth of gold gorgeously embroidered. A deep murmur as of many voices came to the ears of the prisoners.

Still the renewal of the assault was delayed; and now came the explanation of it all. The slingers' bullets began again to patter upon the roof, the rush of footsteps again mounted the stairs, the sound of falling bodies lent its deadly import, while words of command rang from the clearing and the woods beyond. Evidently the ever-turning tables had been turned yet again; the victorious Karanian nobles had come up, and the late besiegers were themselves besieged.

For Vance there was nothing to do but wait until his final destiny should be fought out by others, and, for once in his life, he yielded to this usually most distressing of situations with something closely akin to relief. He distinguished three distinct assaults, each of which was evidently beaten back with considerable loss, while all the time the hail of stones fell steadily upon the roof. He found himself cursing the foolhardiness of assailants who persisted in storming a position practically defensible by a single man, but he forgot that they must be as uncertain as he had been of how prompt their help would have to be to prove available. After the third attack, however, the last comers seemed to become convinced of the futility of such efforts, for they drew back and began to depend entirely upon missiles. The stone bullets fell in showers, and several of them, round and polished as grape-shot, whirled through the roof orifice and rebounded from the interior wall. The defence was manifestly weakening to the point of despair. Two more priests dropped, one after another, through the opening, to be as promptly shot as had been their predecessors. Then came another rush, a last brief struggle with defenders evidently all wounded and exhausted unto death, and Vance's heart leaped to see the pale, bearded face of a Phœnician looking wonderingly down at him and striving to accustom his eyes to the smoke and darkness so as to distinguish the dead from the living.

The next moment the American gave way to the strain he had sustained so long, and dropped, like a stone from a sling, upon the reeking pavement.

All these events took place in January and February of 1839; but not more than fifteen years have passed since a former officer of the

United States navy was ruling over a colony of Carthaginian exiles upon an island indicated on no extant map or chart. It is barely possible that he may rule there to-day,—an old man, but doubtless a happy one,—with her who, fifty years ago, was the most beautiful princess that the ancient blood of Phœnicia ever warmed to life.

The priests of Tao died,—all save Lirrhi,—and their bodies were dragged from square and temple and cast into the bridal house of their god, which was then buried under a great mound of earth, that they might moulder with the barbarous creed they served; while the once dreaded mountain pours its molten streams deep under the sea, and troubles no longer the husbandman and the shepherd.

There were princes, too, of a new race in Karana fifteen years ago,—tall men with dark eyes and brown, curling beards; and princesses almost as beautiful as the one who made their father forget home and kin and rank for such kisses as colder climes and ages have frozen upon the lips of colder races than those that once enjoyed the earth.

THE END.



### THE EVOLUTION OF NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING.

THE necessity for advertising, which, reduced to its simplest terms, means making a business announcement, was present from the earliest times. Pompeii and Herculaneum had their advertisements painted on the houses, a form of publicity somewhat similar to our street sign, which is really the most primitive kind of announcement, since it influences but the passer-by. The town crier was largely utilized in Greece and Rome. It was not until the advent of the newspaper, however, that the art began to show that there existed within it possibilities of growth and development. The newspaper furnished at once a natural advertising medium,—a medium that could be carried home by the reader, and which did effective work because it was read at the fireside or in the study, instead of being painted on a single house or bawled forth indistinctly by a crier. The development of the art as a distinct art, based upon recognized principles of influencing the public, is a matter of the last hundred years. Fifty years ago extensive newspaper advertising was regarded as a luxury; to-day it is one of the recognized necessities of trade, a business in itself, having its own experts and specialists, and being constantly improved in its matter and manner.

The idea of a newspaper is said to have originated with the Venetians. It took shape in the form of a manuscript newspaper containing the notices and news of the government, and contained no advertisements. The idea spread, and as early as 1524 small pamphlets or books containing news were printed in Vienna and other parts of Germany. Their publication was irregular, and little is known at present concerning them save that they existed. One of them is now preserved in the British Museum. This news-book, which was issued in 1591, without any name of place, contains a record of all the great occurrences of the years 1588 and 1589. In it appears a notice that closely resembles an advertisement. It seems that a certain curious plant had made its appearance in the town of Soltwedel. A Dr. Lister thereupon wrote a book purporting to contain an explanation of what this phenomenon portended. "This book," says the advertisement, "which as yet is not much known, shows and explains all that this plant contains. Magister Cunan has published it, and Matthew Welack has printed it in Wittenberg. Let whoever does not yet know the meaning of this portent buy the book and read it with all possible speed."

This can hardly be termed an advertisement. It is really a "puff," and may be regarded as the original production of the kind. It is probable that the book and the newspaper were printed at the same shop, and the latter used to advertise the former. It is curious to note in this connection that, although books were the first articles advertised, the method of advertising has changed but little within the last two centuries, it being still the custom to make only a bare and formal

announcement of name, price, and contents, while in the case of other articles, notably soap, the finest artistic and descriptive skill is called into requisition in giving them publicity.

The first collection of miscellaneous newspaper advertisements is found in a Dutch black-letter newspaper dated November 21, 1626, and relates to exhibitions of elephants and tigers, the opening of schools, and other matters.

In England the first newspaper was attempted in 1622. A demand arose for news, which a bookseller named Nathaniel Butler hastened to supply by the publication of a weekly newspaper, patterned after the Venetian gazettes. Mr. Butler secured no advertisements of outsiders, but the first advertisement published in England appeared in the third issue of his newspaper, and read as follows:

"If any gentleman or other accustomed to buy the weekly editions of newes be desirous to continue the same, let them know that the writer, or rather transcriber, of these newes hath published two former newes, the one dated the 2nd and the other the 13th of August, all of which do carry a like title, with the arms of the king of Bohemia on the other side of the title page, and have dependence one upon another: which manner of writing and printing he doth propose to continue weekly, by God's assistance, from the best and most certain intelligence. Farewell. This twenty-third of August, 1622."

This is the publisher's own announcement, and can hardly be called a genuine advertisement. It was not until January, 1652, that the first real English advertisement made its appearance. It was printed in the *Mercurius Politicus*, and read as follows:

"Grenodia Gratulatoria, Heroick Poem; being a congratulatory panegyrick for my Lord General's late return, summing up his successes in exquisite manner. To be sold by John Holden in the New Exchange, London."

From this time advertisements began to increase slightly. They were of a very simple character, principally of lost articles, or making bare business announcements in a heavy cumbersome style that is in striking contrast to the light and attractive advertising that is in vogue to-day. We find in the *Mercurius Politicus* of 1658 an announcement of "That excellent and by physicians approved China drink, called by the Chineans Tcha, by other nations Tay, alias Tee." About the same time chocolate began to be introduced into England, and an advertisement in the *Public Advertiser* calls attention to the beverage. Coffee was advertised several years later, and we are told that a pound of the East India berry cost eighteen pence. The *Public Advertiser* already mentioned consisted almost entirely of advertisements. Small personal and local wants were advertised: the idea of selling commodities entirely by advertising, as at present, had probably occurred to no one.

A few venders of quack nostrums appear to have recognized at once that they had been supplied with a method of increasing their sales. The advertising of proprietary medicines still remains the most profitable, though the character of the medicines, as well as of the advertisements, has considerably changed. The earlier medicine com-

pounders used the wildest hyperbole in regard to their remedies, recommending them for almost every conceivable ill or blemish that ever afflicted or could afflict humanity. When, later, honest and reliable manufacturers of medicine made their appearance, they were compelled to fight a battle with the unbelief which the advertisements of the earlier workers in that field had engendered.

In 1675 Sir Roger L'Estrange issued a weekly paper called *The City Mercury*, of which he distributed free one thousand copies, trusting to the revenue from advertisements to reimburse him. This plan is worthy of comment, for it foreshadows the plan of newspaper publication at the present day, viz., to depend for revenue principally upon receipts from advertising. The time was apparently not yet ripe for so advanced an idea, for history tells us it did not succeed. In this publication appears an explanation of the advantages of newspaper advertising which is worthy of reproduction:

"That this way of publishing is much more advantageous than giving away 'Bills' in the street is certain, for where there is one of them read, there is twenty is not; and a thousand of these cannot be supposed to be read by less than twenty times the number of persons, and are done for at least the twentieth part of the charge, and with much less trouble and greater success, as has been experienced by many persons that have things inserted in it."

Early newspaper advertising owes more to one John Houghton than to any other individual, since it was he who first impressed on the public mind the fact that advertising is a universal medium for bringing buyer and seller together and can be applied to any trade or profession. Houghton was a Fellow of the Royal Society; his business was that of apothecary, to which he added the selling of tea, coffee, and chocolate, then new beverages that had yet to fight their way to popular acceptance. In 1682 he established a one-folio half-sheet newspaper, which he called *A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, modelled on the *City Mercury* of 1675. It failed, but was revived ten years later. Houghton soon began to see that a publication without advertisements could not be profitable, and resolved to secure some. The method adopted by his advertisers was peculiar. They did not yet comprehend the advantage of "keeping their names before the public," for the announcements appear to emanate from the publisher himself, as witness the following:

"I want a pritty boy to wait on a gentleman, who will take care of him and put him out an apprentice."

"I know of several curious women who would wait on ladies to be housekeeper."

"I want a complete young man, that will wear livery, to wait on a very valuable gentleman; but he must know how to play a violin or a flute."

In course of time, names were added to the advertisements. The publisher early repudiated any responsibility for the announcements appearing in his "Collection." He continued, however, to guarantee certain advertisers of whose reliability he was assured.

Houghton soon began a systematic campaign to induce all classes to

advertise. He made no wild claims for the excellence of his medium, but simply and candidly expressed his beliefs. Thus in one of his issues we find the following:

"Whether advertising of schools, or houses and lodgings about London, may be useful, I submit to those concerned."

Successive issues show that this appeal had met with responses, and Houghton calmly remarks in one of these issues that "I now find advertisements of schools, houses, and lodgings in and about London are thought useful." Later he makes the following remark: "I believe some advertisements about bark and timber might be of use to both buyer and seller." Having called the attention of the timber men to the advantages of newspaper advertising, he now began to consider the parsons, and announced that he "would gladly serve the clergy in all their wants." This bare announcement was apparently unproductive, for we find him later making this offer: "If any divine or their relicts have complete sets of manuscript sermons upon the Epistles or the Gospels, the Catechism or Rituals, I can help them to a customer."

The use of second-hand sermons was far more general in those days than now, when a minister who delivers another man's sermons is likely to be exposed as a plagiarist. In a succeeding number Houghton announced that he had sold all the manuscript sermons intrusted to him, and solicited others. He also showed his ability to help the clergy in other directions, by making announcements such as these:

"If any incumbent within twenty miles of London will dispose of his living, I can help him to a chapman."

"A rectory of £100 per annum, in as good an air as any in England, sixty miles off, and an easy cure, is to be commuted."

In addition to this class of advertisements, Houghton's paper frequently contained general advertisements such as these:

"Last week was imported

Bacon by Mr. *Edwards*,

Cheese by Mr. *Francis*,

Corral Beads by Mr. *Paggen*.

"If any desire it, other things may be inserted."

Houghton went the rounds of all professions, he himself announcing that he would first induce to advertise counsellors and attorneys, then surgeons and gardeners, lawyers, schools, and woodmongers, brokers, coaches, and carriers, in the order named. As a result of his industry and perseverance, we find that a motley collection of articles was advertised in subsequent issues of his paper. Among these may be mentioned oxguts, hoops, onions, pictures, feathers, quills, gherkins, masks, leather, painted sticks, sweet soap, Scotch coals, and a host of other articles. It is evident that, owing to the efforts of Houghton, an appreciation of the benefits of newspaper advertising was beginning to become general. In fact, the advent and the work of Houghton mark an era in the evolution of newspaper advertising. The style he introduced was cumbersome and artificial, but he impressed on his contemporaries the great usefulness of the newspaper as an advertising medium. The advertising of the next century—the eighteenth—bears the impress of his work. Curiously enough, it did

not make much improvement on his methods. It remained for the nineteenth century to advance the art to a higher plane.

There are, however, some interesting matters about advertising in the eighteenth century to be chronicled. For instance, in 1702 the first daily newspaper, called *The Daily Courant*, was issued. It met with but little encouragement from its weekly contemporaries, but its proprietor persevered. It was printed on one side of a sheet not larger than half a page of foolscap. It contained no advertisements in the beginning, but began gradually to secure them. The daily newspaper has enormously increased the output of advertising, and it is in this connection only that the *Courant* has any present interest for us. The advertisement tax, which went into effect in England in April, 1712, perhaps did more to discourage newspaper advertising than any other agency. A tax of three shillings and sixpence was charged on each advertisement until 1832, when the tax was practically abolished, a small nominal tax remaining until 1853. The establishment of the *London Times* in 1788 marks the era of the modern newspaper advertisement, the greatest development of which was henceforth to be in America. In 1832 the *Times* paid one hundred and seventy thousand pounds as its tax on advertisements, showing how general the practice of the new art had become. Since that time newspaper advertising has grown wonderfully in the United Kingdom, but it has never kept pace with its growth in the United States. No journal devoted to the subject exists in Great Britain, while here we have almost a dozen; no great taste in display is apparent in the advertisements that come from across the sea, while here the clothing of a newspaper advertisement in appropriate type is widely practised and understood.

During the Revolutionary war our newspapers teemed with advertisements, political and otherwise. One of the New York papers of 1775 states that "the Committee of Inspection, having examined into the charges that James Dundas and Peter Shaw have spoken with contempt of the honorable congress and its officers, do find them guilty, and hold them up to public view as enemies of liberty, and urge all good citizens to abstain from any dealing with them." A third, fearing the loss of his trade by the same process, "humbly acknowledges that he has spoken disrespectfully of the Hon. Continental Congress, and begs forgiveness of it and of his country, promising submission thereto." There is a notice that the new stage-coaches plying between New York and Philadelphia will leave every Tuesday and Friday morning. A paper published at Philadelphia for the week preceding that in which the Declaration of Independence was adopted contains the advertisements of a number of merchants who are anxious to sell out at cost, in anticipation of the coming of a hostile army. One offers a large stock of crockery; another advertises "Russia drilling and linens, osnaburgs and sail-cloths, cinnamon, and a few pieces of silk;" another calls attention to his assortment of "duffles and taffetas" that must be sold at any sacrifice. An English servant-girl, having two years to serve, and described as "handy, apprehensive, and honest," is advertised for sale to some one living outside of the city. A gentleman lately from London wishes to teach drawing in water-colors; a



schoolmaster is wanted in Maryland at six hundred and fifty dollars a year; and the loser of a silver watch says "she had a black ribbon to her and brass key, and a seal in the shape of a compass." The best green tea is advertised at thirty-two shillings and sixpence per pound, and coarse salt at six shillings and sixpence a pound.

Advertisement cuts were introduced into New York in 1787 by a furrier who used a picture of a woman neatly clad in winter apparel. Since that time pictures have been widely used in newspaper advertising. As has been aptly said, they speak a universal language, and make their appeal not only to the lettered, but to the illiterate who cannot read any other form of advertisement. To-day newspaper advertising consists largely of attractive pictures, the advertisers having discovered how potent an influence these wield.

The advancement of the art in the present century has been barely less than marvellous. The nineteenth century saw what no previous century had seen,—men depending upon newspaper advertising to introduce their entire product. The first advertising agent began business in 1846. The influence of the agent in inducing people to avail themselves of the benefits of advertising has been great, while his technical knowledge has steered to success many an advertising bark that would otherwise have foundered.

The first newspaper directory, containing a list of all the newspapers in the United States, was issued in 1869. It contained names of five thousand two hundred and nineteen newspapers, while the 1896 edition contains over twenty thousand, having an aggregate circulation of over forty-one million copies per issue. The publication of this directory advanced newspaper advertising greatly, for it gave the public access to a list of newspapers, and enabled many who did not care to do their advertising through an agent to do it individually. It also made patent, what previous advertisers had probably overlooked, that advertising space in newspapers is a commodity, and that the measure of value is circulation: that is to say, that the price of space is, or should be, based upon the circulation of the newspaper. This idea has been steadily gaining ground of late, and has conduced to put newspaper advertising upon a business basis.

The first magazine advertisements were inserted, according to the statement of one of the oldest living agents, in 1867. The advertisement writer who devotes himself exclusively to advertisement writing is a creation of the last ten years.

At present about two hundred million dollars are expended annually in the United States in newspaper advertising. The art has become a science. Advertisers everywhere recognize that it is founded on psychological principles, and that the man who studies his fellows and knows them thoroughly makes the best advertiser. In the future individual advertisers will probably do less newspaper advertising, for they will have learned to make what they do more effective and thus require less to accomplish a given object. This will not make the bulk of advertising less, for coincidently with a better understanding of the subject more people will advertise.

*Oscar Herzberg.*

## THE PLAY OF THE BRONCHO.

**B**E it known that he who has ridden only on an English pig-skin will find that there are things he has no knowledge of when first he throws a leg over the stock saddle of the West; and when he has seen a broncho-buster ride a bucking mustang on its native heath he must admit that although the cowboy may be neither neat nor well mannered, he can yet give points on rough riding to those who follow the fox-hounds.

As the cowboy's mode of riding is distinctive, so is his horse furniture, and it is admirably adapted to his particular needs. The stock saddle, for instance, is as different from the English hunting or park saddle as a park drag is from a trotting sulky; yet each is perfectly suited to the purposes for which it was designed. The stock saddle is of Spanish-American birth, and must be heavily built—sometimes forty pounds in weight—in order to have the requisite strength, for the high horn or pommel is necessary to the cowboy in all the uses of the lariat, or "rope," as it is now almost universally called, and thus it is required to stand the most sudden and severe strains. The rope is a very essential article of the cow-puncher's equipment. It is ordinarily about forty feet long, and can be thrown with accuracy perhaps thirty feet by the average puncher, although some use it effectively at a distance ten or fifteen feet farther if its length is proportionately greater. In catching stock or in hauling anything, be it a mired wagon, a bogged steer, or wood for the camp-fire, the rope is given a double turn around the horn, and the saddle must be strong indeed to endure such work. Moreover, it must be tightly girthed over the heavy saddle-blankets, and this calls for the cumbersome cinch-rigging, which in most parts of the West is double. The stirrups are hung rather far back, and the cowboy rides with a straight leg carried well under him, and with feet thrown somewhat out from the horse's sides. He grips with his thighs more than with his knees, sitting easily and apparently loosely in the saddle, swaying with his horse's movements and guiding it with a slack rein. There is nothing stiff or unyielding about his seat; he is lithe and graceful, and consequently wearies his mount in the least possible degree. His mode of riding is as individual as is that of the Cossack, or the Bedouin, or him of the pink coat; it is the seat of freest activity alike to man and beast, and for wild riding on rough ground there is no seat to be compared with it.

The canter or "lope" and the fox trot are the cowboy's usual gaits, and hence they are the paces to which the cow pony is most accustomed. These ponies of the cattle ranges are often as intelligent as they are vicious. The well-trained "cutting pony," pride of its rider during the bustling days of the round-up, is an animal of surprising activity and rare instinct. In fact, the good cow pony is a utilitarian trick pony. Less beautiful than its equine fellow of Eastern bridle-paths, it has learned things the East could never teach it. The slightest motion

of the rider's bridle hand, or the most gentle pressure of his leg, will cause it to whirl as on a pivot, without feeling the bit; but, more than that, it knows how to climb skyward on almost perpendicular slopes; it can safely jump fallen timber on slippery mountain-sides; cut bank or coulée, boulder-strewn mesa or gopher-holed prairie, never stops its headlong speed; and when the rope's noose has dropped about the victim it knows the will of its rider without word of command. Nowhere are horse and man more nearly one than on the Western cattle ranges, and nowhere does the rider sit his horse with more daring grace. With a seemingly easy seat the cowboy will keep his saddle during the wildest antics of his horse, sometimes riding a bad buckner until the terrible concussion causes him to bleed at the nose; and there have been instances in which the puncher was forced to shoot the horse under him in order to save himself from physical hurt.

The bucking of an "American" horse is to the bucking of a broncho as a sham battle is to the real thing, and sitting a bucking broncho on an English saddle is to the same diversion on a stock saddle as walking a "live" wire is to walking the tight rope of the circus. The cowboy knows a thing or two about the riding he is called upon to do, and he has wisely built his saddle in accordance with his knowledge. It fulfils his needs perfectly, awkward as it may seem on a park roadway. I had ridden a bit on stock saddles, but not enough to teach me their superiority for the work demanded of them, when most unexpectedly I had my first lesson in the ways of the bucking broncho. The episode took place in a dreary little sleepy frontier town, and afforded great entertainment to the inhabitants thereof. I must say now that, having had experience with its kind, I much prefer to study the gyrations of the confirmed buckner from the pedestrian point of view. I am convinced that in the West more kinds of trouble can come to the man on horseback than to him who uses any other means of locomotion; the vicissitudes of the chap who goes afoot, no matter what he may encounter, are as nothing to those of the fellow on a fish-jumping horse, for the buckner, you must know, is a thing to be taken seriously.

Word reached me early one morning of an Indian ball-game to be played that day across the mountains, so I promptly set about negotiating for a horse on which to ride over to the ground. The horse brought me was a sleek, round-barrelled, clean-limbed pony that looked fit to run for its life. While the owner cinched the saddle on the animal I sat under a cottonwood-tree and put on a pair of sharp American spurs that had accelerated my progress during many a ride in the "States." I was well pleased with the appearance of my mount, although there was an uneasiness in the shifting eye and restless ears that was better understood an hour later. The owner placed himself at the horse's head, holding it by the bridle with both hands, as I put my foot in the stirrup and swung into the saddle; then he instantly stepped back. I spoke to the brute and pinched him with my knees; he launched out viciously with his hind feet. This was threatening; immediately the air was laden with omens of catastrophe, but it was too late, even had I wished it, to call for a certificate of the horse's character. I held

hard with my legs and drove the spurs home. With a sudden movement that carried my bridle hand down to his neck he dropped his head between his forelegs, at the same time arching his back like a bent bow and squealing loudly. As he did so he jumped into the air, head down, back up, dropping with his full weight on his stiffened forelegs, every muscle tense and strained. The instant his hind feet touched the ground he jumped again, dropping as before. He seemed to like it, and continued the sport, covering several feet at each springless leap. I did not like it; neither did I know any way by which to stop it.

Deeming it impossible successfully and in good order to disengage myself from the saddle during the brief and engrossing moments of ricochet, and having no parachute with which to effect a dismount during one of the beast's aerial flights, I stuck to the saddle with all the adhesiveness I could command. It was not that I gloried in the contest; it was only that I was endeavoring to prolong my life by at least a few seconds. Whatever may have heretofore come to pass in the history of equestrianism, I am confident the leaps of that horse were the highest, longest, and quickest ever known in equine gymnastics. We proceeded across the prairie in that jarring, bone-dislocating manner, I trying the while to maintain a firm grip with my knees and at the same time keep my spurs out of the brute's hide. It seemed fore-ordained that I should meet my death in the saddle, or rather out of it, and I contemplated my end with all of the sinner's trepidation and reluctance. In the third jump my narrow-brimmed hunting-hat was shaken from my head, and if my revolver holster—or "scabbard," as they call it there—had not been empty I should doubtless have lost my gun. Before the sixth jump my head seemed to be coming unfastened and my loose cartridge-belt about to fly over my shoulders. Earthquake, volcano, cyclone, explosion,—all natural and unnatural disturbances gave token of having pooled their dire destructiveness in the acrobatic feats of that pony. The earth jarred; the sky trembled. My internal organs appeared to be entangled beyond hope of surgical restoration. However, the kind fate that guards the infant and, be it said, the drunken man must that day have had its protecting care about me, for I was able to maintain my grip until the railroad was almost reached. Then, as the horse came to the ground after a particularly exuberant leap, he dropped his right shoulder considerably lower than his left, and I was thrown far enough to that side to shake my seat. Another plunge would have caused me to "hit the flat" most unceremoniously, and clearer visions of a broken neck and a fractured skull flitted before my eyes. But it was his last jump: up came his head, down went his back, and he yielded the fight. As the crow flies, the railroad may have been a very short distance from my starting-point, but as reached by a series of heaven-climbing leaps it was a journey to be reckoned in leagues of space and weeks of time. I glanced about me with a heart full of thankfulness, and met the gleeful gaze of the entire village. I had not known there were so many people in it as turned out to laugh at the show of which I seemed to be the involuntary clown. Riding back, I met the owner

of the horse approaching with my hat in his hand and an amused and astonished look upon his weather-beaten face.

"Wall," he said, "I'll be dog-goned if you couldn't ride a wild hoss. I thought you was a tenderfoot, but you rode him like a cow-boy. Why, hell! I thought he'd buck you to death!"

His surprise, however great, was not equal to mine. It could not have been. In the light of personal experience I feel justified in saying that the Southwest is the land of the practical joker *par excellence*, and that the owner of my mount is a past-master among his fellows. If there are many who rival him in his native town I am glad my visit there was short, and if there are not, even then do I not regret my early departure. And, however much I may commend the park saddle when one's mount is Eastern-bred, I am ready at all times heartily to endorse the stock saddle when astride an animate earthquake of the woolly West.

Alan Hendricks.

### THE HAUNTED BURGLAR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE APE, THE IDIOT, AND OTHER PEOPLE," ETC.

ANTHONY ROSS doubtless had the oddest and most complex temperament that ever assured the success of burglary as a business. This fact is mentioned in order that those who choose may employ it as an explanation of the extraordinary ideas that entered his head and gave a strangely tragic character to his career.

Though ignorant, the man had an uncommonly fine mind in certain aspects. Thus it happened that, while lacking moral perception, he cherished an artistic pride in the smooth, elegant, and finished conduct of his work. Hence a blunder on his part invariably filled him with grief and humiliation; and it was the steadily increasing recurrence of these errors that finally impelled him to make a deliberate analysis of his case. Among the stupid acts with which he charged himself was the murder of the banker Uriah Mattson, a feeble old man whom a simple choking or a sufficient tap on the skull would have rendered helpless. Instead of that, he had choked his victim to death in the most brutal and unnecessary manner, and in doing so had used the fingers of his left hand in a singularly sprawled and awkward fashion. The whole act was utterly unlike him; it appalled and horrified him,—not for the sin of taking human life, but because it was unnecessary, dangerous, subversive of the principles of skilled burglary, and monstrously inartistic. A similar mishap had occurred in the case of Miss Jellison, a wealthy spinster, merely because she was in the act of waking, which meant an ensuing scream. In this case, as in the other, he was unspeakably shocked to discover that the fatal choking had been done by the left hand, with sprawled and awkward fingers, and with a savage ferocity entirely uncalled for by his peril.

In setting himself to analyze these incongruous and revolting things



he dragged forth from his memory numerous other acts, unlike those two in detail, but similar to them in spirit. Thus, in a fit of passionate anger at the whimpering of an infant, he had flung it brutally against the wall. Another time he was nearly discovered through the needless torturing of a cat, whose cries set pursuers at his heels. These and other insane, inartistic, and ferocious acts he arrayed for serious analysis.

Finally the realization burst upon him that all his aberrations of conduct had proceeded from his left hand and arm. Search his recollection ever so diligently, he could not recall a single instance wherein his right hand had failed to proceed on perfectly fine, sure, and artistic lines. When he made this discovery he realized that he had brought himself face to face with a terrifying mystery; and its horrors were increased when he reflected that while his left hand had committed acts of stupid atrocity in the pursuit of his burglarious enterprises, on many occasions when he was not so engaged it had acted with a less harmful but none the less coarse, irrational, and inartistic purpose.

It was not difficult for such a man to arrive at strange conclusions. The explanation that promptly suggested itself, and that his coolest and shrewdest wisdom could not shake, was that his left arm was under the dominion of a perverse and malicious spirit, that it was an entity apart from his own spirit, and that it had fastened itself upon that part of his body to produce his ruin. It were useless, however inviting, to speculate upon the order of mind capable of arriving at such a conclusion; it is more to the point to narrate the terrible happenings to which it gave rise.

About a month after the burglar's mental struggle a strange-looking man applied for a situation at a saw-mill a hundred miles away. His appearance was exceedingly distressing. Either a grievous bodily illness or fearful mental anguish had made his face wan and haggard and filled his eyes with the light of a hard desperation that gave promise of dire results. There were no marks of a vagabond on his clothing or in his manner. He did not seem to be suffering for physical necessities. He held his head aloft and walked like a man, and an understanding glance would have seen that his look of determination meant something profounder and more far-reaching than the ordinary business concerns of life.

He gave the name of Hope. His manner was so engaging, yet withal so firm and abstracted, that he secured a position without difficulty; and so faithfully did he work, and so quick was his intelligence, that in good time his request to be given the management of a saw was granted. It might have been noticed that his face thereupon wore a deeper and more haggard look, but that its rigors were softened by a light of happy expectancy. As he cultivated no friendships among the men, he had no confidants; he went his dark way alone to the end.

He seemed to take more than the pleasure of an efficient workman in observing the products of his skill. He would stealthily hug the big brown logs as they approached the saw, and his eyes would blaze when the great tool went singing and roaring at its work. The foreman,

mistaking this eagerness for carelessness, quietly cautioned him to beware; but when the next log was mounted for the saw the stranger appeared to slip and fall. He clasped the moving log in his arms, and the next moment the insatiable teeth had severed his left arm near the shoulder, and the stranger sank with a groan into the soft sawdust that filled the pit.

There was the usual commotion attending such accidents, for the faces of workmen turn white when they see one of their number thus maimed for life. But Hope received good surgical care, and in due time was able to be abroad. Then the men observed that a remarkable change had come over him. His moroseness had disappeared, and in its stead was a hearty cheer of manner that amazed them. Was the losing of a precious arm a thing to make a wretched man happy? Hope was given light work in the office, and might have remained to the end of his days a competent and prosperous man; but one day he left, and was never seen thereabout again.

Then Anthony Ross, the burglar, reappeared upon the scenes of his former exploits. The police were dismayed to note the arrival of a man whom all their skill had been unable to convict of terrible crimes which they were certain he had committed, and they questioned him about the loss of his arm; but he laughed them away with the fine old *sang-froid* with which they were familiar, and soon his handiwork appeared in reports of daring burglaries.

A watch of extraordinary care and minuteness was set upon him, but that availed nothing until a singular thing occurred to baffle the officers beyond measure: Ross had suddenly become wildly reckless and walked red-handed into the mouth of the law. By evidence that seemed irrefragable a burglary and atrocious murder were traced to him. Stranger than all else, he made no effort to escape, though leaving a hanging trail behind him. When the officers overhauled him, they found him in a state of utter dejection, wholly different from the light-hearted bearing that had characterized him ever since he had returned without his left arm. Neither admitting nor denying his guilt, he bore himself with the hopelessness of a man already condemned to the gallows.

Even when he was brought before a jury and placed on trial, he made no fight for his life. Although possessed of abundant means, he refused to employ an attorney, and treated with scant courtesy the one assigned him by the judge. He betrayed irritation at the slow dragging of the case as the prosecution piled up its evidence against him. His whole manner indicated that he wished the trial to end as soon as possible and hoped for a verdict of guilty.

This incomprehensible behavior placed the young and ambitious attorney on his mettle. He realized that some inexplicable mystery lay behind the matter, and this sharpened his zeal to find it. He plied his client with all manner of questions, and tried in all ways to secure his confidence: Ross remained sullen, morose, and wholly given over to despairing resignation. The young lawyer had made a wonderful discovery, which he at first felt confident would clear the prisoner, but any mention of it to Ross would only throw him into a violent passion

and cause him to tremble as with a palsy. His conduct on such occasions was terrible beyond measure. He seemed utterly beside himself, and thus his attorney had become convinced of the man's insanity. The trouble in proving it was that he dared not mention his discovery to others, and that Ross exhibited no signs of mania unless that one subject was broached.

The prosecution made out a case that looked impregnable, and this fact seemed to fill the prisoner with peace. The young lawyer for the defence had summoned a number of witnesses, but in the end he used only one. His opening statement to the jury was merely that it was a physical impossibility for the prisoner to have committed the murder, —which was done by choking. Ross made a frantic attempt to stop him from putting forth that defence, and from the dock wildly denounced it as a lie.

The young lawyer nevertheless proceeded with what he deemed his duty to his unwilling client. He called a photographer and had him produce a large picture of the murdered man's face and neck. He proved that the portrait was that of the person whom Ross was charged with having killed. As he approached the climax of the scene, Ross became entirely ungovernable in his frantic efforts to stop the introduction of the evidence, and so it became necessary to bind and gag him and strap him to the chair.

When quiet was restored, the lawyer handed the photograph to the jury and quietly remarked,—

"You may see for yourselves that the choking was done with the left hand, and you have observed that my client has no such member."

He was unmistakably right. The imprint of the thumb and fingers, forced into the flesh in a singularly ferocious, sprawling, and awkward manner, was shown in the photograph with absolute clearness. The prosecution, taken wholly by surprise, blustered and made attempts to assail the evidence, but without success. The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

Meanwhile the prisoner had fainted, and his gag and bonds had been removed; but he recovered at the moment when the verdict was announced. He staggered to his feet, and his eyes rolled; then with a thick tongue he exclaimed,—

"It was the left arm that did it! This one"—holding his right arm as high as he could reach—"never made a mistake. It was always the left one. A spirit of mischief and murder was in it. I cut it off in a saw-mill, but the spirit stayed where the arm used to be, and it choked this man to death. I didn't want you to acquit me. I wanted you to hang me. I can't go through life having this thing haunting me and spoiling my business and making a murderer of me. It tries to choke me while I sleep. There it is! Can't you see it?" And he looked with wide-staring eyes at his left side.

"Mr. Sheriff," gravely said the judge, "take this man before the Commissioners of Lunacy to-morrow."

*W. C. Morrow.*

*QUARANTINE FOR CATTLE.*

**T**HE quarantine for the temporary detention of emigrants is well known to the majority of people; but that imported animals are compelled to go through a similar experience is not so generally known. Even those who know have slight knowledge of its purposes and what it really is. The first and important purpose of the animal quarantine station is to protect the stock of the breeder and farmer throughout the country from contagious diseases, and, incidentally, to save the government the expense of a million or more dollars. That is what it cost the government to stamp out pleuro-pneumonia ten years ago. At that time a herd of forty Holstein cattle was imported from abroad and kept for a time on Long Island. Subsequently the herd was broken up, and the cattle were taken to different parts of the country. There was pleuro-pneumonia in that herd, and the disease spread among native cattle. So destructive did it become that the government was called upon to eradicate the disease. Numbers of cattle-inspectors went throughout the country, examining herds of cattle, and killing such as were affected. The disease was finally stamped out; but to prevent the introduction of other diseases the government deemed it advisable and also cheaper to establish national quarantine stations. This was done; and once more the United States showed the way in a novel and wise enterprise.

In point of efficiency our system leads the world. There are three regularly established quarantine stations in this country along the Atlantic coast; but scattered along the Canadian and Mexican borders are a number of small stations that do but little business. The bulk of the trade is done at Baltimore, Boston, and New York. In almost every case the quarantine stations are at some distance from their ports, and in the country. The largest and most important, that of New York, is at Garfield, New Jersey. About seventy animals are in quarantine at this station weekly. This one was established in 1884 by the Department of Agriculture, and is run under its direction. It is a farm of about twenty-five acres, two miles from Passaic, and a few hundred feet from the river of that name. It is also within a few hours' ride of New York. The farm is owned by a land company, which leases it to the government for eighteen hundred dollars a year. When the government was looking around for a site for a station, it could have bought the farm for ten thousand dollars, but, instead, it leased it. The rent has amounted to over twenty thousand dollars; and not very long ago a lease of the farm for three years longer was made.

The superintendent's office and the quarters of the two keepers who take care of the farm are in a large, old-time country house, built of brown stone, which, for no apparent reason, has been covered with a thin layer of plaster, giving the house a pale drab appearance. It stands a short distance from the road, and the front is very pretty with a light wooden trellis thickly covered with vines. A good brook ran

through the farm until the Erie Railroad made a dam above it and cut off the supply of water. There is a considerable growth of underbrush and small trees on the place, which tends to make it malarious. The actual work of the station is done in twenty-eight barns, similar in structure and appearance to those in use at country fair grounds.

Most of the importers of cattle in this country are aware of the quarantine regulations; and when an importer intends to bring over cattle, or sheep, or swine, the only animals quarantined, he notifies the Department of Agriculture. United States cattle inspectors are stationed in England, who examine all animals shipped for this country, and grant certificates to the effect that there is no disease among them, and that they have not come from diseased herds. The superintendent at the station, who at present is Dr. John B. Hopper, is informed of the expected shipment, and examines the animals on their arrival at the port of New York. He inquires especially if there has been any sickness on their way over. That done, they are shipped to Garfield. A spur of the Erie road runs to a platform at the farm; there the keepers receive the animals and take them to the barns along the entrance road of the farm. There is another road by which they leave after being released from quarantine. The reason for having two roads is to prevent the animals arriving from coming in contact with those departing.

A separate barn is provided for each consignment, and is light and well ventilated. Every barn has its own yard, of ample size for the exercise of the animals; in every yard is an artesian well, so that no contagion can be carried by water. The government gives the use of the farm free to owners of the animals, but they must supply feed and keepers to take care of their stock. If they do not, the government hires men, furnishes food, and tenders a bill for them. This must be paid, or the animals are sold at auction. The expense of taking the stock from New York to the quarantine and back again is also borne by the owners. It is against the rules of the station for the keepers of one herd to go into the barns and yards where other consignments are kept.

Every day the superintendent makes the rounds of all the barns and inspects the animals. He examines the cattle especially for pleuropneumonia and tuberculosis, the sheep for foot-rot and diseases of the mouth, and the swine for hog cholera. Horses are not quarantined, and neither are any of the other domestic animals, for the reason that their flesh is little used for food. The main reason for quarantining cattle, sheep, and swine is, after all, to prevent the spread of disease to the human body. In case of the discovery of any contagious disease, the chief of the Department of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture is notified, whereupon he visits the quarantine station and deals with the herd according to the gravity of the affection. The yard and shed in which such diseases appear are disinfected thoroughly, the litter and fodder are burned, and the whole place is left unoccupied for three months.

The term of quarantine varies; cattle are kept for ninety days, in which period any undeveloped disease is expected to appear; sheep and swine are detained only fifteen days. At the end of their respec-



tive quarantines the animals leave the station, and the sheds are then disinfected.

A circumstance that occasioned the keepers great anxiety, which, however, in the end proved groundless, was the consignment of nine Brahmin cattle to Mr. O. P. Belmont. Before the cattle arrived, they were notified to meet them at the railway station. They were informed that the animals would be in crates, two in each. That, of course, meant that they must be lifted from the cars.

"Gosh!" exclaimed one of the keepers, who had fought in twenty-five battles of the late war, "I'm no giant. Do they think I'm a derrick, that I can lift half a ton?"

But he obeyed orders, as he did under General Hooker. He was much surprised to find them not as big as large calves. The cattle had come a long distance, were off in their feed, and for a few days had to be nursed along and humored on different feeds. That was the reason of their quarantine.

Occasionally there are some very amusing incidents connected with the quarantining of some animals, especially the swine. Sometimes they create a great deal of trouble, and furnish amusement for the spectators at the expense of the patience of the keepers. One of these occasions cost six men nearly a night's sleep. The offender was a big Berkshire boar, nearly half a ton in weight. He was too big to be carried in a crate, and too stubborn to go into quarantine except in his own way. It was about a quarter of a mile from the railway to the barn set apart for him, and he spent two hours on the journey. He started all right, but had not gone far before he began to distrust the Jersey atmosphere near the Passaic River; and he did not like a half-dozen men flashing lanterns about him and switching his back with sticks. So he stopped, and then bolted,—a course he repeated dozens of times. After he had tired of bolting, he came to a small bridge over a brook run dry. He stood in the middle, and sniffed, and then was unlucky enough to step on the end of a board that was not fastened down. This let him down into the bed of the brook with no gentle force. It was by no means as soft as the hog's fat body. Then he bolted, and there was a scramble to get out of the way of his tusks. Finally, however, by a great deal of perseverance, he was driven into quarantine, where he served out his term of fifteen days.

But the trial of quarantine is not confined to cattle, sheep, and swine; lions and tigers have been known to undergo such imprisonment. When Hagenback's animals came to this country for the first time, they spent some time in quarantine.

*H. H. Bowen.*

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### BRIDAL ROSES.

**T**HESE blossoms, sweet, will wither in an hour;  
Not so my reverence: that will ever flower.

*Clinton Scollard.*

## SUICIDE AMONG THE ANCIENTS.

**A**MONG the early Greeks suicide was uncommon until they became contaminated by Roman influence. Their religious teaching, unlike that of their Asiatic contemporaries, was strongly opposed to self-destruction. While a pure and manly nation, they regarded it as a heinous crime, and laws existed which heaped indignity upon the body of the suicide. By an Athenian law, the corpse was not buried until after sunset, and the hand which had done the deed—presumably the right hand—was cut off and buried separately, as having been a traitor to its owner.

The only suicides ever spoken of with respect, or anything approaching commendation, by the early Greeks, were those of a purely patriotic character, like those of Themistocles and King Codrus, both of whom were considered patriots. The latter, when the Heraclidæ invaded Attica, went down disguised among the enemy with the intention of getting slain, and, having picked a quarrel with some soldiers, succeeded in his object. The reason for this act was that the oracle had pronounced that the leader of the conquering army must fall; and the king sacrificed his life in order that his troops might be victorious and his country saved. Themistocles is said to have committed suicide rather than lead the Persians against his own people.

This spirit, however, and the laws in accordance with it, began to fall into disuse with the rise of the philosophic school. The Sophists, declaring that the gods had been invented by some clever statesman to overawe the people, preached the new doctrine of individual liberty. They taught that the gods were myths, that man's reason was his only guide, and that, aided by both conscience and reason, every man had absolute freedom concerning his own life or death. With this teaching, suicide, as might be expected, quickly lost its former reprehensible character, and came to be looked upon not only as a legitimate but as an honorable mode of death. This doctrine of individual freedom was maintained by the Cynics, some of whose philosophers quitted life voluntarily when, for any reason, they thought its continuance undesirable. Thus Diogenes, named by Plato "the mad Socrates," committed suicide, as did many of his followers.

With the Stoics, who followed the Cynics, suicide was made a dogma, and the utter worthlessness of life was preached at every opportunity. The Stoics lived moral and useful lives; but when, from any cause, they found life displeasing, they promptly sought death. Zeno, the founder of the school, his successor, Cleanthes, and many other leading Stoics killed themselves.

The Epicureans, from a lower platform, preached the same freedom to terminate life as soon as it ceased to give pleasure. It was from the Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy that suicide spread to Rome, where it naturally found a congenial soil among a deteriorating nation.

The teaching of the Stoics and Epicureans was adopted by some

of the greatest scholars of Rome, and suicide soon became quite common. Seneca, Nero's tutor, was one of the most ardent advocates of self-destruction. His scheme of life may be summed up in his own words: "Does life please you? live on. Does it not? go whence you came. No vast wound is necessary; a mere puncture will secure your liberty."

During the centuries immediately preceding and those following the opening of the Christian era, voluntary death was at its worst in Europe. Broadly speaking, the teaching of all the philosophers, orators, and poets of the time was that suicide was not only justifiable, but was a noble and courageous act. Among the propagators of this doctrine may be mentioned Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Cleanthes, and Marcus Aurelius; and it can be truthfully asserted that many of the greatest men of pagan Europe died by their own hands. In this way Aristotle, Demosthenes, Zeno, Cato, Brutus, Hannibal, Mark Antony, and many others, met their death.

This popularity of suicide must have been due, to a certain extent, to the teaching of the learned men of the time, which has, as a rule, a powerful influence upon the educated classes. And, as the actions of great men are usually followed by numbers of inferior men who wish to rank with those they ape, the frequency of suicide among the *hoi polloi* must be in part attributed to the example of the philosophers. Nevertheless, it would not be correct to class even a majority of the suicides of this period among the Greeks and Romans as the result of any teaching, although many were undoubtedly due to this cause. It is certain that the bulk of the voluntary deaths, occurring as they did among markedly degenerate people, who were deteriorating with every generation, were, like the suicides of to-day, due to insanity (using the word in its widest sense), disgust of life, and that uncontrollable desire to die which is so marked a sign of decay, and which no alienist has yet fully explained.

When vice and dissipation were at their height in Rome, self-destruction was most common; and, as has already been mentioned, suicide was most frequently met with among the Greeks after they had been contaminated by Roman manners and customs. In a few words, the prevalence of suicide was a disease, produced by a depraved condition. As vice and debauchery increased, crime, immorality, disease, and self-destruction also increased. Indeed, with the Romans under the Empire, suicide seems to have been one of nature's most active and effectual methods of stamping out a people who had become too degraded for continued national existence.

When the Greeks and Romans recognized the impossibility of preventing suicide, they decided to establish tribunals whose duty it should be to hear the applications of those persons who wished to die. Ludicrous as this idea may appear to us, it is almost identical with the system suggested by Sir Thomas More in his "Utopia," published in 1516. If the applicant succeeded in showing what the tribunal considered good cause for quitting life, his prayer was granted, and he destroyed himself under the authority of the court. In some instances the court not only sanctioned the suicide, but supplied the means of self-destruction

in the shape of a decoction of hemlock. If any one applied for permission to end his life and was refused, and in defiance of the decision committed suicide, his act was illegal, and such punishment was inflicted as could be meted out under the circumstances. The Romans, for example, confiscated the property of the deceased; the Greeks held his memory as dishonored, and treated his body with indignity.

The Roman law, as laid down in the Institutes of Justinian,—a Christian emperor,—about the middle of the sixth century, held that suicide was justifiable if it arose from disgust of life or from grief at loss of friends, or when it was desirable to escape bodily suffering from disease. It was also considered pardonable when it arose from insanity, and a distinction was drawn between the suicide who was, in the ordinary sense, responsible for his act and the one who was not.

Under the Roman law suicide was illegal when it was committed to shield crime, or in disobedience of the order of the court, or when no sufficient reason could be discovered. But the act in itself was regarded as criminal only when, as in the above cases, it affected the state injuriously. The theory was that the suicide by voluntary death evaded that just punishment which his acts deserved. If an accused person voluntarily put an end to his life, the law held that he had pleaded guilty by refusing to meet the indictment. Nevertheless the law was just, for if the accused were proved innocent, no injury fell upon his estate or his memory. The property of a person who committed suicide while under an accusation of crime was confiscated for the time being; but the heirs were at liberty to have the case tried in the same manner as if the accused were alive, and if the charge were not proved, the heirs took the estate as if the deceased had not been under any accusation at the time of death.

Even soldiers and slaves were, under the Roman law, entitled to put an end to their lives like ordinary citizens. If a soldier unsuccessfully attempted suicide, he was forgiven the act if he could show that he had been driven thereto by some great sorrow, misfortune, or disease, or if he could prove what we now call "temporary insanity;" but if he failed in this his offence was capital, and, as a punishment, the State carried out the act which he had attempted.

*Lawrence Irwell.*

### LIFE'S MYSTERY.

WE live, and love, and die;  
 And if we question why  
 The weal, the woe,  
 And to what end, a sigh  
 Bears Nature's sole reply:  
 We live, and love, and die,  
 Ere we may know.

*Mary E. Stickney.*

## WILLIAM'S SPREE.

WILLIAM PLUMBER was walking up the village street on his way home from the Corner. In one hand he carried a small parcel done up in brown paper. With the other, which was in his pocket, he jingled the remainder of his week's earnings. This sum he intended to give to Melissa his wife to lay by.

His face was thin and cadaverous. His clothes, though respectable, were neither new nor of a very recent cut. He went at a sober, plodding gait, and one hand was always in his pocket. He had the reputation of being very close. His eyes alone contradicted the general expression of his lean aspect. They were blue, childlike, mildly curious, and kind.

William's homeward way led him past Hull's, a recent acquisition to Centreville. A solid front of glass, brilliantly lighted, displayed the whole interior of the store to the enraptured gaze of the street. On the left side was a show-case in which was exhibited a distracting array of candies and frosted cakes. On the right a marble soda-fountain, running the whole length of the counter, was gorgeous with silver-plated knobs and spigots. Pure fruit-juices and ice-cream were offered. Seats were placed for customers along the front of the counter, and there were silver-plated holders for the glasses.

It was believed that Hull's was as fine an establishment as any to be found in the city. But opinions were divided as to the desirability of such a place. Some denounced it as tending to levity and extravagance; others maintained that it was a powerful rival to the liquor-stores, and therefore to be encouraged. William had no opinion either way. He always passed Hull's with a gaze of grave, impersonal curiosity. He looked at the gay windows and the glories within, not as he would have looked at a quarter or a basket of seedling potatoes, but rather as the tourist regards the Doge's Palace. It was a spectacle outside the beat of his possible experience.

On this occasion, however, he was greeted jovially by a group of young fellows who were hanging about the door. They were lively, idle youths, with no object in life but the vague design of amusing themselves, and they eyed William with considerable glee. The meagre, slouching form, the infinitesimal package that represented his week's marketing, the hand in his trousers-pocket, tenderly jingling his remaining silver pieces and coppers, all these advertised with beautiful unanimity William's weak point. The boys assailed it forthwith.

"Hello, Plumber! come in and treat us," said Bob Fiske, the tallest and most influential of the group. The others echoed the cheerful invitation, and they all began to crowd around their victim, pressing him to remain and be their host.

William gazed from one grinning face to another without the least resentment. "Not to-night," said he, soberly: "I haven't time to stop." And he plodded on into the darkness.



Such passive game was tacitly voted "no fun;" the boys instantly found something else to engage their attention; but to William the little incident was of much importance. It was not often that any one asked him for anything, even in joke. He was not disliked or avoided, exactly, but his reputation for closeness set him apart from his neighbors. No one ever approached him with a subscription-list, or tried to sell him tickets for a Ladies' Aid entertainment, or suggested his contributing toward a dressing-gown for the minister. He and his wife were as much apart from the mild sociability and neighborliness of the village life as if their little farm had been in Hindostan.

And yet William was not parsimonious by nature. Early training and necessity had made him economical, and circumstances had fostered his saving turn. His wife was prudent and thrifty; they had no children, and their wants were few. To "lay by," therefore, day after day, week by week, year in and year out, had become the working hypothesis of both their lives. Chief of their simple diversions was the counting of their store and studying ways to increase it. No other scheme of life had ever occurred to either of them.

But to-night an altruistic impulse began vaguely to agitate the gray matter of William's brain. "Why shouldn't I treat them?" he said to himself, in an experimental way. The thought grew familiar and even pleasant as he walked along. By the time he had reached the turning, his mental processes brought him to a full stop. "It may take as much as two or three dollars," he reflected, "but I'll do it, I declare I will."

He turned back. The gilded youth of Centreville, roosting on the railing in front of Hull's, were a good deal surprised when William's gaunt figure appeared again in their midst.

"Look here, boys," he said, slowly. His face was luminous with the light of heroic resolve. "I've made up my mind to treat you."

"The deuce you have!"

"Great Scott!"

"Good Lord, William, don't be rash!"

They gathered round him again with whoops of good-natured banter. But William was too simple-minded and too preoccupied with the magnitude of his purpose to notice the sarcasm. To him the delighted grins meant joy pure and simple in the prospect of the coming treat. He led the way into Hull's forthwith.

"Yes," he repeated, with solemn emphasis, "I'm goin' to treat you. I'm goin' to treat you all."

The boys followed with much hilarity.

"Good boy, William!"

"Go it, old man!"

They slapped him on the back with a familiarity that delighted his soul and warmed the cockles of his heart. His eyes were bright, his cheeks showed a dull red under the sunburn. He was as excited as a girl over her first party.

The proprietor looked up with a startled air when the noisy crowd precipitated itself into the middle of his little shop. But his face

reflected the general mirth when Fiske announced, with a faintly perceptible imitation of William's drawl,—

"Mr. Plumber, sir, has made up his mind to treat us. He's goin' to treat us all."

"Yes, Ebenezer," William affirmed, genially. He stepped to the front, and indicated with an awkward wave of his hand how large was the contingent upon his liberality.

"Now, boys, choose what you'll have," said he.

To his excited vision the number seemed to double and treble. "It may take a five-dollar note," he reflected, recklessly, "or even more. But it's worth it."

The choosing began:

A few people who had been leisurely drinking soda-water set down their glasses and stepped back to watch the fun. Ebenezer looked on with a broad grin. To William it seemed only natural that the matter of selection should be a serious thing.

Charley Ludlow changed his mind at least five times. Fiske was torn between the rival seductions of strawberry cream and orange phosphate. At last he appealed to William.

"Lord bless you," said William, beaming, "I don't know anything about those things. But take your time, take your time. I want you should be suited."

He rubbed his hands with almost jovial satisfaction. It seemed very luxurious and extravagant, all this talk of fruit syrups, ice-cream, and so on. He had tasted ice-cream only once or twice in his life, and of fruit syrups he heard now for the first time. "But I'll do it," he still maintained within himself, "if I have to mortgage the farm."

Fiske and his crowd were among Ebenezer's most constant and lucrative customers. They were, therefore, privileged characters, and very much at home in the little place. While Bob, having vaulted over the counter, was ladling ice-cream into the glasses, and two of the others, with much rejoicing, were manipulating the silver-plated spigots, William called Ebenezer aside.

"See here," said he, in a significant undertone, "I'm paying for this treat, you understand?"

Ebenezer nodded, and winked his right eye to the room. The left was turned toward William.

"I'm not prepared to pay to-night," continued William. "This whole affair was gotten up on the spur of the moment. I hadn't expected to do it,—never dreamed of such a thing. I'll drop in and settle with you to-morrow."

"All right," said Ebenezer, with his good-natured grin. All the people in the room were smiling. William afterward said to his wife, in describing the incident, "I don't know when I've seen a lot of people all so kind of happy and pleasant-lookin'."

Thus the time slipped away in social intercourse and conviviality. Meantime, out at the farm on the edge of the village, Melissa was waiting in growing anxiety and suspense. The clock was not more punctual and reliable than William. For fifteen years he had gone to

the Corner every week to do the little household trading. He started commonly at half-past seven, and could be seen coming down the road on his way home as the clock struck eight.

But to-night eight o'clock went by, the quarter-hour, and still no William. Melissa stood by the window, gazing anxiously down the road. At last she made up her mind to set her yeast, and then, if he did not come, to walk down to the village and see what had become of him.

It was just a quarter of nine when the gate clicked sharply, and a quick, unfamiliar tread sounded on the walk. The next moment the door opened and William burst in. His manner and appearance startled Melissa even more than his absence had done.

"For the land sake, William," said she, "what's happened?"

William stood on the door-mat, facing his wife. His eyes shone. He tried in vain to repress his happy excitement. At last, with an almost boyish whoop, "Melissa," he said, "I want you should get me out a five-dollar bill."

"Well, I declare!" said Melissa.

She took her hands out of the flour, dried them, and sat down weakly in a chair.

"The truth is," William continued, "I've been on a spree, Melissa. A kind of a debauch, so to say. I've been treatin' the boys down to Hull's. Who? Let's see. There was the Fiske boys, and Will Connell and Joe, some friends of theirs from the city, and I don't know who beside; half the town was there. I give 'em an evenin' they won't forget in a hurry. And now," he added, pretending to draw a long face, "I've got to square up, I s'pose. Never mind; it ain't often you get a chance to give as much pleasure as that. I'd 'a' done it if I'd had to mortgage the farm. That's what I said to myself when I saw them all standin' round so pleasant and cheerful and happy. 'I'll do it,' says I, 'if I have to mortgage the farm.'"

Melissa, with a dazed look on her face, took down the old pocket-book and counted out five dollars in silence. William transferred the sum to his own wallet, and went on describing his adventure with a loquacity that bordered on enthusiasm. Melissa regarded him from time to time with anxious, sidelong glances; she had gone back to her mixing. At last she said, in a worried tone, "Don't you think, William, you'd better take a little lavender?"

"No," said William, "but I'll tell you what I *will* do. I'll go down and square up with Ebenezer right now. I don't want that debt should stand."

"Land!" remarked Melissa; "it's close on to ten o'clock."

"I don't care," said William. "I guess he won't be shut up. I'd rather not let the account stand over."

He took his hat and went out. The truth was, he found Melissa's mood depressing. When a man has made important sacrifices in the interest of his fellow-beings, when he has reversed all the habits and instincts of a lifetime for the sake of giving pleasure to others, and when he believes that his native town is ringing with the praise of his generous conduct, it is hard that his wife should offer him lavender.

He reached Hull's just as the proprietor was shutting up shop for the night. He was greeted with languid hospitality.

"You, William?" said Ebenezer. "Lord! you didn't come back to pay for that soda-water, did you? Why, that's no consequence."

"Yes, I thought I would," William answered, a little crestfallen. "I thought I wouldn't let it go over." He drew out his wallet and began to unstrap it slowly. "How much will it be?" said he.

"Well," Ebenezer pondered, yawning, "let's see. There was the two Fiskes, and Joe and Will Connell, and the city feller, and Stu Wilson, and Billy Scott. Seven in all. That'll be thirty-five cents, I guess."

William gazed for a moment, open-mouthed, bewildered. Then without a word he laid down one of the five bills he had brought, received the change, and left the store. Once out in the street, he took off his hat, mopped his face with his handkerchief, and let the night wind blow through his hair.

When he reached home, his customary manner was so far restored that Melissa said nothing more about the lavender. "I guess his walk done him good," said she to herself.

In silence he wound up the clock, brought in an armful of wood, and lit the bedroom candle. He never again referred to his spree.

*Louise Boynton.*

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### THE AMERICAN DRAMA.

WHILE the theatrical business in this country is now picking up considerably, it may not be amiss to investigate the cause of the low ebb to which it has fallen during the past few years. Managers of our theatres attribute the loss of patronage to a decline of interest in the drama, to the invasion of foreign stars, who are the rage for a brief period only, to hard times, and to the fact that a number of our best known artists are leaving the drama on account of the excellent opportunities that are offered on the vaudeville stage. It is not to be denied that these causes have all had their effect, but they alone will not account for the depression. The truth seems to lie in the fact that our managers are offering us the same food to-day that they offered years ago (of course there are many exceptions), and are surprised that the public palate rejects it.

Managers are unanimous in declaring that the American drama is yet to be written, and they are constantly on the lookout for another piece like "A Celebrated Case" or "The Two Orphans;" but if such a piece were found it is certain that it would not possess the same attractiveness as its predecessors. The drama of mere incident is moribund, and when the revival comes it will be when an entirely new generation of play-goers is with us,—those to whom the tricks of the constructors of melodramas are not familiar. The American audience of to-day is well versed in stage methods, and can foresee the solution of a new play as soon as the subject is announced. Those elements of

surprise and novelty that in days gone by were so alluring can no longer serve to satisfy the audience. Suitable situations are becoming scarce. The combinations of situations have been so thoroughly exploited that later melodramas recall others more or less ancient.

Recently one of our well-known writers—one who has probably written more and better melodramas than any other of the admittedly great playwrights—produced a drama. It proved a dismal failure; not because it was not strong and well made, but because it was written in the same vein that the author had been using for years, and the public was tired of his product. The same bitterness was experienced by Scribe, although he has never been surpassed in technical skill and ingenuity.

The question arises, Have American managers studied the artistic side of their business? We are compelled to answer in the negative. Had they watched the tendencies of the sister arts, painting and fictional literature, they would have noticed that a closer course to nature was being pursued. "We English," says an English writer, "excepting in the works of Milton, who drew from revelation, can show no exposition of a moral theory equal to that of Æschylus, who drew from nature." The fundamental principle that must be taken as the basis for plays is truth to nature. Human individuality is distinct, and when well depicted is always interesting. Théophile Gautier tells us that after an idea has been worn threadbare in literature it is exploited on the stage. Scenes representing life must be true, as well as logical.

The Americans are interested students of human nature,—more so than any other nationality,—and realism on the stage is the demand. Human character and conduct is the whole subject-matter of all moral science; naturalness in human character and conduct is the sound foundation for the American drama. The question has been asked, "Wherein is Shakespeare the greatest of authors?" and answered thus: "Not in the perfection of his form, nor in his mastery of language, nor in the beauty of his images, nor even in his characterization, great as were his excellences in all these respects; no, his unique and surpassing greatness lies in his comprehension of the moral order of the world." The dramatic art builds up a world for itself, so that to-day we possess within the wide world of experience a Homeric world, a Dantean world, a Cervantean world, and others,—all of which are beneficial to mankind.

A certain clergyman in New York City recently asked the question, "Is the stage injurious or beneficial to the world?" I shall not attempt to answer the question: I shall quote,—

Time rushes o'er us; thick as evening clouds,  
Ages roll back: what calls them from their shrouds?  
What in full vision brings their good and great,—  
The men whose virtues make the nation's fate;  
The far, forgotten stars of human kind?  
The stage,—the mighty telescope of the mind!

We are told that Emile Augier's plays are too good and too quiet for us. Would not "Le Gendre de M. Poirier" or "Les Fourcham-



bault" be welcomed here? 'Tis true they have been presented here, and under somewhat unfavorable circumstances, but the public taste is improving daily, and a drama that proved a failure ten, ay, five, years ago might to-day win abundant applause. Conventional backgrounds have long disappeared. We must rid ourselves of the conventional tricks of dramatic construction. The pre-Raphaelite movement in art may be old, but its good effects are plainly visible.

It is an oft-repeated phrase, "The drama holds a mirror up to Nature," but how much oftener does Nature see herself in her deformity than in her beauty, chastise herself for her ugliness, and, as Goethe sings,

Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen  
Resolut zu leben,—

strive to conduct her affairs on lines of truth, goodness, and beauty?

The characters, incidents, and dialogue of our plays must appear real. We must see ourselves as others see us. Shakespeare tells us, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." We are anxious to see our own passions, feelings, and hopes represented in others. The world is a stage, and we are the actors, but how many of us in our daily walk of life come in contact with murders and assassinations, to say nothing of the numerous hairbreadth escapes that are daily depicted on the stage?

The people of this generation are students of George Eliot, Howells, and Hardy, rather than of Wilkie Collins. If we had more plays of the type of James A. Herne's "Shore Acres" and Robert Buchanan's beautiful pastoral drama "Squire Kate," our theatres would not have to complain of poor patronage. If the dramatist will let the character, and not the events, influence the action, a good foundation can be relied upon. But the desire of our managers seems to be to have each act end as a fairy-tale, with all the personages assembled in groups as the curtain is rung down.

By leaving out the poetical last act of "Rip Van Winkle," and reviewing only the domestic side of the story, a good illustration of realism is obtained. Here we see the hero of the Catskills in a natural and domestic character, full of humor and pathos, in which he moves the hearts of men to soft and tender emotions. Jefferson has the rare gift of placing his characters in such situations that they excite terror, affection, pity, curiosity, merriment, and sorrow, thus adding virtues and charms in a way peculiar to himself.

The American stage of to-day is in somewhat the same position as the English was twenty-five years ago; that is to say, too much time is given to melodrama and broad farce. But England had some one come to her rescue. Just as things came to this crisis, Tom Robertson, after waiting for years in poverty and anguish, availed himself of the opportunity to change the general routine of the drama. Happy surprises came from his pen, dramas depicting life and character as his audiences knew them,—such as "School," "Caste," "Society," and "Ours." Not only were they appreciated then, but to-day, through the interpretation of Mr. John Hare and his Garrick Theatre Com-

pany, they serve to delight the American audience. After all, his work was not always true,—for instance, the examination scene in "School," and the unnatural Froissart-quoting Marquise in "Caste;" but, as the dramas were truer than anything before them, they won immediate applause, and the Robertsonian style was quickly felt.

When England was applauding Robertson for his efforts in the direction of naturalness, America was hearty in her applause of the French drama of unchastity, which, beginning with "Camille," was continued through "Frou-Frou," "Séraphine," "Fernandi," etc. While these plays were being produced here in every phase, the lord chamberlain forbade their presentation in London, and not until a few years ago did the English become thoroughly surfeited with them.

In my opinion Mr. Daly has proved himself the most original among our American managers. While his productions point strongly in the direction of naturalness, they do not pretend to deal with the serious side of our daily life, but run in the direction of light comedy.

I do not mean to intimate in the least that the appreciation of the works of the few great dramatists will decrease. In those that are popular with the public, the characters were drawn with such close observation and marvellous intuition that they will remain interesting.

"The proper study of mankind is man." The drama of to-day is the drama of actuality; the drama true to nature; the drama that conforms to the modes of life and thought. The drama that depicts our actual experiences, and conforms to the present taste in literature and art, is the drama that will win the enthusiasm of the American public.

*Ingram A. Pyle.*

### A PLAGUE-STRICKEN CITY.\*

BY THE FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR SOCIETIES.

IT is difficult for people who have not seen the plague face to face to realize that the horrors of the scourge of the Middle Ages are possible in this year of our Lord 1897.

Where are our doctors? what are our sanitary engineers doing? what has become of the plumber, with his traps and drains and cut-offs and lengthy bills,—that all these guardians of the public health should allow such a terrible outbreak of violent disease to half depopulate one of the greatest cities of the world and spread possible contagion to the four quarters of the globe?

People looked for such periodical outbreaks in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but we pityingly and patronizingly speak of those days as the "dark ages" of sanitary science, when plumbers were an unknown quantity, and medicine was but little removed from the

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\* Dr. Clark, on a recent official journey through India, wrote this article in Bombay while the bubonic plague was at its height. His text, including the present tense throughout, is of course preserved.—Ed.

powdered snails and pellets of medicated frogs' eyes which the doctors of China affect to-day.

But this is the nineteenth century, and its waning half-decade at that; this is the age of lymphs and serum and microbe-destroyers and bacteria-fighters; this is the age of Jenner and Pasteur and Koch; and yet, in the presence of such a pestilence as that from which Bombay is suffering, the doctors are at their wits' end, and we might apparently as well be back in the century of Daniel Defoe.

Bombay is the second city in size in the British Empire. Its nearly one million of inhabitants place it before Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, and Melbourne, and next to London itself in population. Moreover, it is a city not only great in size, but great in commercial importance, in influence and enterprise. It is the "Eye of India." Some of the most imposing buildings in the world are found here. The Victoria Railway Station, for instance, is probably the most magnificent building of its kind on the planet. Euston, St. Pancras, the great station at Frankfort-on-the-Main, the Grand Central on Forty-Second Street, and even the splendid Union Terminal at St. Louis, must hide their diminished heads before this queen of railway stations, the Victoria.

So also the university, the post-office, the great hospitals, and the new municipal buildings can hold their own when compared with those of any European or American city.

Moreover, Bombay is probably one of the most picturesque as well as one of the most cosmopolitan cities on the face of the globe. The European and Asiatic, the ruling nation and the subject races, "plain" and colored, black and white, and all the shades of tan and brown, jostle one another in the streets of Bombay as in no other city in the world.

Here, in a short walk of a quarter of a mile, you see the dignified Moslem with his long puggaree (just the length of his final winding sheet) wound around his head into a most becoming turban. You see the mild-eyed, handsome, high-caste Brahmin with his orange-and-gold tope. You see the rich Parsee in his high glazed hat, surpassed in ugliness only by the Englishman's "stovepipe." You see the modern belle in tailor-made gown just out from Worth's, and, side by side with her on the street, a Parsee lady, clad in graceful garments of costly silk, a single length swathing her in its ample folds from head to heels.

You will see little Lord Fauntleroy with fair flaxen curls and pallid cheeks, showing that he must soon go back to England to escape the dreaded Indian climate so fatal to children, and, not ten feet away, a little Indian lad and lass, *sans* hat, *sans* shoes, *sans* trousers or jacket or dress, as bare as they came from their Maker,—naked and not ashamed.

Said a friend of mine to me the other day, and I believe the statement is true, "No one could get himself up in a costume so bizarre or fantastic as to cause an old resident of Bombay to turn his head or take even a languid interest in the passer-by."

If a man should appear in Bombay with a frying-pan on his head for a hat, a big string of beads on his manly breast in lieu of a coat, a

barrel-hoop dependent from each ear, a small crow-bar stuck through his nose, one hip swathed in red calico and the other as nature made it, with a pair of forty-league boots on his feet,—if, in this costume, he should parade the streets of Bombay, he would not be locked up in a lunatic asylum. By no means! He would be considered one of "our highly esteemed fellow-citizens." No small boy would follow him with derisive hoots; no reporter would interview him for an extra edition; in fact, no one would look at him twice.

In such a city, so diverse in its characteristics, so cosmopolitan in its population, has the bubonic plague broken out. It is the same fell pestilence that depopulated London. As 1666 is known as the year of the great Plague in London, so 1897 will be known as the great Plague year of Bombay.

I reached Bombay on the 27th of December, 1896, when the plague was assuming its worst type and when the number of deaths each day was extremely large.

The view of the city as one enters the beautiful harbor is charming in the extreme. After five days on the Indian Ocean with nothing but the scudding schools of flying-fish to break the monotony of the voyage, and five days previously on the Red Sea, where the occasional glimpses of land are terrifically stern and forbidding, one is well prepared for the palm-clad shores, and for a beautiful modern city of substantial business blocks, whose streets are lined with noble, spreading banyan-trees.

From a distance it looks like anything but a plague-stricken city, it must be confessed. Life and not death seems to have its home here. But one cannot be long on shore without feeling the depression of a place over which the angel of destruction is hovering. Everywhere I saw evidences of his presence. The closed shops, the half-deserted streets, the absence of wedding and festive processions, which usually at this time of year make Bombay a perfect kaleidoscope of life and color, all proclaim that something is wrong.

But there are more tangible signs of pestilence. Here is a hovel from whose roof all the tiles have been torn off to let in the blessed, purifying sunlight upon some dark, disease-breeding hole. In front of a dozen houses in the next street through which we pass are little disinfesting fires burning, showing that the plague has come near that dwelling and perhaps claimed half its occupants for its own. Hundreds of these little sidewalk fires are burning all over the city, pointing out the infected houses to the passer-by. They are built of short sticks of hard wood, on which is sprinkled an abundant supply of sulphur. Of what value this can be, only the city fathers of Bombay know. The fumes cannot reach the houses with any degree of effectiveness, and, though they may disinfect the air to a slight degree and thus benefit the passing traveller, the benefit must be nearly infinitesimal.

But other and more effective means are employed. Whenever an infected house is discovered it is visited by a squad of municipal officers; the furniture is cleared out, the bedding is burned, and the interior is thoroughly whitewashed. In many cases, too, the tiles are torn off the roof to let in the purifying sun.

One of the most effective measures yet devised is the cutting off of the water-supply from the poorer houses of the infected district. In the dark and noisome passage-ways where hundreds of thousands of these people live, in abodes little bigger than underground drains, the free supply of city water has been a bane rather than a boon. The taps were always running or dripping, and earthen floors were always damp and soaked with filth, forming a very hot-bed for disease. Of course the people objected to the cutting off of their water-supply, and deep and loud were the grunts and growls against this interference with their rights, even though they had only to go out into the street to draw water from the ever-flowing pipes. But the authorities persisted, and this fruitful source of disease has been removed.

Another plan, tried to a larger extent, and to a degree successful, is the segregation of plague-stricken households. But there is fierce and bitter opposition on the part of many of the natives to the idea of segregation. All sorts of stories are rife among them as to the object of the authorities. Some even think that their hearts will be plucked out and made into charms by which the foreign doctors hope to conjure away the plague.

Another scheme has been proposed, but as yet has found very little favor: it is to draw a cordon around the infected city, to station troops all along the line, and to allow no one from Bombay to go beyond this boundary. It is argued, and with a good deal of reason, that this would only intensify the pestilence in the spots already infected, would create an uncontrollable panic among those who could not get away, and would almost doom the city to destruction.

The causes to which the more ignorant of the population ascribe the plague are various; in fact, almost every cause except the right one, the filth and unsanitary condition of their city, is assigned. Some ascribe it to the malevolence of their deities, and others to the unfortunate conjunction of the stars, while still others, most curiously, have laid the burden upon the aged shoulders of Queen Victoria. A few months ago her beautiful Jubilee statue was defaced by some miscreants with a liberal coating of tar. This outrage was deplored by all well-meaning people, and was denounced in the native as well as in the English papers. But many of the people believe that the apologies rendered at the time were not sufficient, and that now the old queen is visiting her wrath upon the city that defiled her image.

A friend of mine engaged in zenana work was refused admission one day by some of the women who before had always heartily welcomed her. When she came to learn the cause, she found that it was because she was supposed to be a spy of the English government in the service of the queen, who had come to ferret out the misdeemeanors of the people and to punish with the plague any murmuring against her gentle sway.

It can readily be imagined that business is suffering terribly and that many industries are almost at a stand-still. Master-workmen cannot induce laborers to enter their employ. Clothing-houses and shoemakers' shops are deserted by the workmen. Many factories have had to close their doors, and in every branch of life the effect of the



pestilence is felt. The government has been compelled to issue very stringent orders concerning the civil servants, threatening them with expulsion and with loss of pension if they yield to the prevailing panic and leave the city. One of the results of the plague is strange indeed. Litigation has come almost to a stand-still. Case after case is called, we are told, only to disclose the fact that parties or witnesses are not forthcoming. It would appear that the judges are sitting rather for the sake of setting an example than for the sake of the work they can get through. But unless matters mend, says *The Pioneer*, they will absolutely be at the end of their business and the sitting will be closed by the force of circumstances.

In spite of all efforts and precautions, the plague has increased in the number of its victims and in the mortality of those attacked, and the authorities seem utterly unable to cope with the destroyer. Medical science is baffled, and sanitary experts appear to be of little avail.

It is not to be wondered at that all sorts of quacks and nostrum-venders should come to the fore at such a time as this, and many of the remedies are of an unearthly and immaterial sort. Fakirs promise that if due reverence is paid to the divinities they worship, the plague will soon disappear, and grave announcements to this effect are frequently made in the daily papers. Not only the native papers but the English journals contain many strange announcements in these days. Here is one copied *verbatim* from the leading Bombay daily, printed therein without comment or reflection of any kind:

"Pandit Swaroopdas telegraphs to us from Shikarpore: I undertake to free Bombay of its plague, if goat-flesh, fish, and liquor is supplied to me for sacrificial purposes in quantities sufficient to equal, approximately, a day's consumption in Bombay. Further condition is that no slaughter of larger animals should take place on the day the sacrifice is offered. I am ready to leave for Bombay on invitation. I require neither remuneration nor travelling expenses."

Many other proposals to pacify the enraged deities have been published, but, so far as I know, the city authorities have not seen fit to adopt these means to secure immunity from the plague.

It can be well imagined that the signs of death are numerous in every direction. On the day of my arrival in Bombay no less than ten funerals passed the house of the friend with whom I was staying, and it was mournful in the extreme to hear the wails of the afflicted, and the still more dreadful noises of the native musicians who often accompany a funeral train. Sometimes these processions bear the poor body to its last resting-place in the middle of the night, and it is weird and melancholy in the last degree to awake at two o'clock in the morning, perhaps, to the horrid din of a funeral procession, and to hear the monotonous refrain of the bearers, "Ram, Ram, Sachha!" ("Ram is true!") repeated over and over and over again.

If a Mohammedan is being borne to his last resting-place, the unchanging cry of the mourners and the bearers is, "There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet."

Busy indeed are these days at the various burning-ghats of the

city. As we drove, one evening, on one of the principal streets behind a high wall we could see a brilliant flame shooting upward and illumining the sky above and the blank wall beyond. This was one of the burning-ghats where the Hindu dead are cremated, and, looking through the open door-way, we could see scores of lurid fires licking up the bodies placed between the glowing logs. The sticks of wood which are used for cremation purposes are about six feet long. Of these a platform is built some four feet broad and two feet high. Upon this platform the dead body is placed; other logs are piled upon it; and pieces of sandal-wood and other fragrant woods are added to the pile. Sacred passages from holy books are read by the officiating priests; the nearest relative then walks three times round the funeral pile, and applies the torch, and in about two hours nothing but a handful of ashes tells of the father or mother or child that was borne within the ghat. More than a hundred bodies, I was assured, were waiting for cremation at one of these burning-ghats in a single day.

The vultures, too, in Bombay are particularly busy during this dreadful epidemic. As is well known, the Parsees are a numerous and influential sect in Bombay. They are sometimes called "the Yankees of the Orient," because of their ability to get on in the world. They neither bury their dead nor burn them, since both fire and earth are sacred to their religion. So they give them to the vultures by exposing them on the Towers of Silence. It is a most gruesome and melancholy spectacle to see these horrid birds of prey awaiting their victims. The towers, large structures of stone and cement, are on Malabar Hill, one of the most beautiful parts of Bombay, and are approached by winding roads through lovely gardens.

These towers are about ninety feet in diameter and fifteen or twenty feet high. On the edge of the towers, often sitting as closely together as they can be packed, are the vultures, waiting with horrid impatience for the next victim that shall be given to their ravenous beaks and claws. Up the long winding road come the mourners, chanting funeral prayers; then follows a man leading a white dog, the emblem of faithfulness; then come a number of priests and the relatives of the family, two and two, holding a white handkerchief between them, which indicates that a bond of sympathy draws them together. When they reach the house of prayer the mourners enter and engage in prayer while the corpse is borne into the Tower of Silence. The body is exposed naked on a platform erected on the inside, which cannot be seen by spectators without. The moment the bearers withdraw, the hungry vultures swoop down upon the corpse, and in ten minutes nothing but the skeleton remains, picked clean of every particle of flesh. For two or three weeks the skeleton is allowed to remain there, when it is thrown into a common pit beneath, with tens of thousands of its nameless companions. Some of these are of high degree, and some of low, but death, the great Leveller, makes no distinction in the Parsee Tower of Silence.

The following grim paragraph concerning the vultures and their dreadful business I have just cut from a Bombay paper. It shows as nothing else can do how soon people will get used to the direst calami-

ties and the most gruesome details, so that they become a matter of commonplace and every-day comment:

"On inquiries regarding vultures and their ability to consume the twelve or thirteen bodies of Parsees taken on an average to the Towers of Silence daily, the Secretary to the Parsee Panchayet has informed the representative of a Bombay paper that the number of vultures has considerably increased of late, and that there is not any truth in the statement that bodies remain unconsumed and are thrown over in the big pit in the middle of the Towers. The fact was, he stated, that in ordinary times the flock of vultures did not subsist on the three or four bodies that were brought in, but soared away to their chief roosting-place and gorged on animal and other food obtainable there. Now they have, by instinct, flocked to the Towers of Silence, and no complaint about their being slack in the work of despatching the dead bodies has been made."

One of the most pathetic sights during these terrible days in Bombay is that of the thousands of poor people who are attempting to flee the city. On the day I left Bombay by the Great Indian Peninsula Route, twelve thousand people, by two lines of road alone, had joined the panic-stricken exodus. The railway stations and all the streets and open spaces in the vicinity were crowded with squatting figures in white cloths, waiting for a chance to board a third-class railway compartment and thus leave the infected precincts.

Huddled together in all sorts of heaps of humanity, in the dead of night as well as in the broad glare of day, were these waiting, frightened throngs. The trains were running in two sections, and all the third-class compartments were crowded to suffocation. Thousands of others left by sea or by the carriage roads, and already it is thought that nearly half the population has shaken the dust of Bombay from its feet and turned its face countryward. The exodus is estimated all the way from two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand, and probably the latter figures are nearer correct. Not all those who try to escape reach the promised land safely, for almost every day, it is said, some corpses are taken out of the trains, and others live only long enough to reach Poonah or Ahmednuggur or some other port of hoped-for safety, and there yield to the destroyer whose seeds of death have been implanted in their systems.

Altogether, the sight of a plague-stricken city is sad beyond expression, and the sympathy of the civilized world has not been expended in vain upon the "Eye of India," so sadly and grievously afflicted.

*Francis E. Clark.*

## READING.

JUST dropping off the harness from our overwearyed thought,  
And resting in the beauty that another's brain has wrought.

*Currie Blake Morgan.*

## THE FANTASTIC TERRORS OF CHILDHOOD.

A CHILD rarely, if ever, speaks of its fantastic fears. We must fall back upon our own memories if we would study this aspect of the childish mind. And so, encouraged by the example of the good ladies in "Cranford," who whisperingly confessed, the one a secret horror of Eyes, the other a life-long dread of being caught by her "last leg" as she got into bed, I recount some of the vividly remembered terrors under which I myself once trembled in silence. For, I repeat, the child does not speak of these things, which to his own soberer judgment seem unreasonable and even preposterous.

Once, as a very little child, I was for some reason alone in a wide treeless place in the country. I suppose I was in reality not far from the house, but there seemed to me an endless expanse around. As I looked about me I suddenly became conscious of the overpowering immensity of the sky and its awful unbroken blueness. A crushing horror and dread seemed to pin me to the ground. I stood, a shuddering mite of a girl, alone under that stupendous weight of blue, feeling that it might descend and swallow me up. I have forgotten everything but that,—how I came there, how I got away; but I know now the precise shade of the terrible intense blue that seemed to be engulfing me.

I should mention that I was a city child and unused to an unobstructed view of the heavens.

Once afterwards I remember a similar but less violent paroxysm of fear under another such clear dark-blue sky, but this time there was a low inexplicable rumble of thunder.

I am sure I said nothing about my terror at either time. Like every other well-regulated little girl, I shrieked and ran from dogs and cows and geese and turkey-gobblers, and made no secret of my cowardice, but of my vaguer terrors it never occurred to me to speak.

At the foot of the lawn of the country-house in which I spent my summers there stood a thick growth of forest trees. When we gathered in the porch at twilight, or when I peeped from the window of my room at nightfall, I would see uplifted against the sky dark gigantic profiles which were inexpressibly terrible to me. I thought of them only as creatures of darkness, and, so far as I remember, made no attempt to trace them in the day.

I am sure I had in me in those days the "makings" of a nature-worshipper of the first order, as perhaps all children have. I thought it rather probable that Indians lurked in the depths of the wood, but my fear of them was as nothing compared to my vague dread of the mysterious great faces in the tops of the trees.

Standing out as distinctly in my memory as the day on which I first became vividly conscious of the sky is another day when, whether for the first time or not I do not know, another form of fear seized upon me.

I was a little older then, I think, but how old I do not remember.

I was in an unused up-stairs room in my own home, sitting upon the floor and sailing a little paper boat in a basin. In the water I had put scraps of paper of various shapes and sizes to represent sea-monsters. I had amused myself, for a long time, blowing the boat about and pretending that the passengers were afraid of the whales and sea-serpents, when suddenly it went down,—why, I could not explain. It seemed to me that it was “coming true,”—the sea, the ship, the sea-monsters; that I might be overpowered by the horror-haunted waters then and there; and I fled panic-stricken.

I think there must have been in my mind a half-belief that there was a latent life in all inanimate things. I know I had a general dread of things “coming to life” or turning to other things.

I most especially distrusted lead water-pipes. Who knew whether they might not turn to snakes on the shortest notice?

It seems strange to me now that with all this horror of mysterious transformations, and particularly of snaky transformations, I should have watched with warm sympathy and approval the efforts of two of my boy cousins to raise snakes on a large scale by soaking horse-hairs an indefinitely long time in a barrel of water. I suppose I was infected by their own enthusiasm. I remember now the stagnant smell of that old barrel, in an out-of-the-way corner of the playground, as I would peep into it to watch the progress of their experiment. There was a pleasing occultness about it all, but not, I considered, overwhelming mystery. For the change was to be brought about by regular recipe, and the snakes would be every-day snakes like those in the fields. The serpents which I held in shuddering dread were shadowy half-mythical creatures lurking in dark unexplorable holes and corners. For it was another primitive instinct of mine to people with monsters all unknown regions.

This fear of the “coming to life” of inanimate objects was, I think, the most pervasive of these irrational terrors.

I do not remember any paroxysm of fear from this source except that caused by what Don Quixote would call the Adventure of the Sea-Monsters, but there was a constant underlying feeling of the possibility of alarm which at times, as I vaguely remember, caused me to be uncomfortable in the society of my own dolls.

Springing, I think, from the same attitude of mind toward the inanimate world was a rooted dread which I had that some day when I was alone with a rocking-chair it should all at once begin to rock. This, I early decided, I positively could not stand.

None of these terrors, it may be remarked, had to do primarily with my personal safety. It was horror rather than fear which possessed me in contemplating these imaginary lapses of the laws of nature. Even a fancy which haunted me that some day my bath-tub might suddenly turn into a narrow, infinitely deep dependency of the ocean is hardly an exception. The dreadfulness of the mere idea of a bottomless pit of dark water with sea-serpents in it opening in one's floor outweighed all personal considerations.

I cannot help thinking, although I do not remember that such was



the case, that I sometimes teased myself with uncanny suggestions, and that then my reason was not equal to the task of combating with and banishing the spectres which my fancy had idly raised. Often, however, I am sure, these grotesque or formless fears were wholly spontaneous and even surprising to myself.

It seems to me that there is manifested in the nature-worship and fetichism of the savage the influence of some such emotions toward the outer world as I myself felt when a child. Partly for that reason I cannot think that they were wholly morbid and unnatural, but rather that there may be common to children similar unreasonable fears which they conceal with the often unrecognized reticence of childhood.

*Annie Steger Winston.*

### THE DECLINE OF THE HERO.

ONCE upon a time we all knew the hero when we saw him. Whether encountered in the pages of romance or history, or come face to face with in what we so ineptly call "real life," the heroic quality was immediately recognized, and was perceived to be one of the great things which make life worth living.

Of course the hero is he who overcomes, and the heroic attitude is that of overcoming. Either by active assault or by passive endurance, the hero conquers. He desires strongly, and attains his desires; he conceives, and executes his thoughts; he has a purpose, and accomplishes it. Or else he conquers by bearing his fate.

"What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; the unconquerable will  
And courage never to submit or yield,  
And what is else not to be overcome,"

exclaims Milton's Satan. But the sentiment which the archangel utters in a bad sense is eternally true in a good. "The unconquerable will and courage never to submit or yield,"—this is the passive side of the heroic, the splendor of endurance.

The three unities of time, place, and action, which certain schools of the drama have thought necessary to the production of a play, are in the hero represented by what we may call the three unities of character,—motive, will, and purpose. Motive is the impelling power; will, the quantity and quality of activity displayed; and purpose, the end aimed at.

Thus equipped, the hero can do or can endure; in other words, he is ready for heroism.

And the three unities of character, motive, will, and purpose, of course imply strength. For, whatever else the hero may be, to be a hero at all, to be, like Saul of old, head and shoulders taller than the people, he must, in some sense, be strong:

It was always so. From the dawn of legendary history down to

the present day, from a dragon to a prejudice, the hero was strong; he knew his own mind and will and purpose, and he overcame. From the brute beast of the forest and the human brute of the road, from the Marathonian Bull and Procrustes, whom Theseus slew, to fear of ridicule and a sneer (twin monsters to the highly complex man of our civilization), the hero gives single combat and overcomes.

Capacity for heroism, then, belief in it, and admiration for it, are the surest signs of a civilization which is advancing; and they are, too, promises of a noble social and political life, of a noble literature, of a true art. For where the feeling for heroism is, the feeling for beauty is never far away, and we do not perceive the one without soon perceiving the other.

Of late, however, there has been a tendency to underrate the hero. Tolstoi would eliminate him, and describes the movements of humanity, not as those of men following leaders, but as being akin to the movements of large bodies of ants, which in their migrations are irresistible and are wont to destroy all that is encountered.

And in the rising tide of socialism which is sweeping so many off their feet, it is likely that the reality and place and work of the hero will be still further overlooked and ignored.

For the well-meaning good people, who look forward to a time when we shall all be of one height and capacity, all uniformed and herded in barracks, all fed at public tables, and when no man shall have more than any other man, or be more than any other man (forgetting that nature knows of but one uniformity, the uniformity of death, and of but one equality, the equality of idiocy), these good people forget that until they succeed in destroying human perception, will, and desire (never the same in any two individuals) human nature must remain what it is and has been, and the lines of development of the future will be but a prolongation of the lines of development of the past.

Now, this blunting of the sense of the heroic begins never at the bottom, but at the top; never among the lower, but—alas that it should be so!—among the cultured and refined.

The sense of the heroic dies first out of the individual life, then out of public and social life, then out of literature. The house of a nation's dwelling is left unto it desolate, its fall is only a question of time, and then a fresher people and a fresher form of civilization take that nation's place. This is poetic justice, but it is immutable law as well. Individual and national life is vigorous only in proportion as it strives to embody the Ideal.

Now, literature, as embodying the universal and immortal, that which is at all times true and which never dies, is indeed like the wonderful Library of Alexandria, over whose portals was inscribed, "Here may be found remedies for the diseases of the mind,"—remedies for useless thinking, for false thinking, and for untenable views of life.

Literature, as the art of written words, by which man has preserved the record of his life upon the earth, literature, in its branches of history and science, shows us causes and modes of operation and

necessary results; and in the branches of poetry and romance it shows us man's aspirations and ideals, things impalpable and beautiful as the atmosphere which bathes the earth, but vital to mental and moral life as that atmosphere is to physical life.

And if this sense of the heroic is one of the signs of individual and national health and strength, then in this respect what is our showing?

There have been literary and historic epochs which were devoid of it. The drama of the Restoration knows no touch of the heroic, and to much of the modern literature of France it is a stranger. And our own particular literature, young and vigorous as it ought to be, nevertheless in some quarters shows signs of failure. The multitudinous heaping together of detail,—what is the effect upon ourselves after we have been personally conducted through it? What, in sum and substance, do most of our present-time books amount to? How much of the heroic do they embody, and where is their sense of beauty?

It may be objected that most of our modern writers choose for their mission the apotheosis of the common and commonplace, and that they do not lend themselves readily to the heroic. But to this one may take exception. Yet in order to penetrate through the commonplace to the heroic and beautiful which surely lie beneath, there are needed a keener and deeper insight, a finer and stronger imagination, and a sterner and truer grasp upon life, than many of our modern writers possess.

For the common and commonplace are, after all, like the leaden casket which contained fair Portia's counterfeit, and he who is truly wise will choose and discover and enjoy. But to choose the common and commonplace for their own sake, to think that because they are most obvious to eye and hand they are best and worthiest of representation,—this seems the quintessence of failure. It may be realism; it never can be art. For art is of a sifted choosing. And art, like life, has two great commandments on which all else depends. The first is that a work should be interesting; the second is that it should be beautiful. For interest arrests the mind, while beauty controls the understanding. Interest gives life, but beauty confers immortality. Not ephemeral and superficial, but universal and lasting, truth should be chosen; then clothe this with beauty, and we have literature indeed.

For beauty is the ultimate power attained, but to that consummation there goes the sense of the heroic.

It is therefore to the hero that we must have regard.

*Ellen Duwall.*

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

*Dead Selves.* By  
Julia Magruder.

One of the most powerful and most touching of the stories with which Julia Magruder has entertained a host of appreciative readers is this *Dead Selves*, which the J. B. Lippincott Company has just issued in a neat blue-and-gold-covered volume.

The hero, Duncan Fraser, is an absolutely devoted student, having given up everything but the pursuit of science, whose charms fill his entire vision. His daring experiments have brought him to the threshold of a mighty scheme, but here he is stopped short, maddeningly near to success, because he lacks the immense sum of money required.

A fortune colossal enough to suit even his purpose is possessed by a young and beautiful widow of his acquaintance, and he has often cold-bloodedly thought of proposing to her, but has always been prevented by his abhorrence of her past. To quote from the book, "The ugly fact about Mrs. Gwyn was this: she had married a man imbecile in mind and contemptible in body, had been his wife for two years, and was the mother of his imbecile child."

Appalling indeed! and yet, when Mrs. Gwyn, or Rhoda, having learned of Fraser's desperate need of money for his work in which she has the firmest faith, offers to invest much of her own income in it, he is not proof against the temptation. He promises her a man's protection and an *entrée* into the best society, for which she has longed, in return for her financial aid, if she will marry him. So this purely business arrangement is completed, to the benefit of both, and they are husband and wife only in appearance.

Here begins the main interest of the story, which lies in the development of the two characters under these peculiar conditions.

Rhoda's ignorant mind finds something more than dress to fill it, as Fraser talks to her of his experiments, until she is able to help him in the laboratory, and as the books he recommends start her thoughts into heretofore undreamed-of channels. The friendship with his mother, a noble woman, awakens her heart, so that she realizes the hideousness of her youthful marriage, and at the same time longs to care for her child, which has been in an asylum since its birth.

Meantime, the husband discovers that, though a man may long deem himself superior to love, yet there comes a time when neither prejudice nor his own will can avail him aught against it; and, as he is softened by her beauty and the increasing loveliness of her nature, he grows to despise himself for having played so unmanly a part in order to obtain her wealth.

The reader will be quite enthralled in following the struggles of this couple with themselves and with each other, and he will find that the key-note of the story is contained in Tennyson's verse quoted by Miss Magruder in her title-page:

I hold it truth with him who sings,  
To one clear harp, in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.

**The Roller Bandage. With a Chapter on Surgical Dressing.** By William Barton Hopkins, M.D. Illustrated.

Four editions of almost any book are sufficient testimony to its essential character. Such, surely, is the case with this compact little volume by a masterful surgeon on one of the minor but most necessary subjects of his profession. *The Roller Bandage, with a Chapter on Surgical Dressing*, by Dr. William Barton Hopkins, of the Pennsylvania Hospital, has taken its place as a standard hand-book which students cannot omit from their equipment, and hence the entire profession will welcome this new edition. To quote Dr. Hopkins's own words with the emphasis of conviction, "It is hoped that through the illustrations the intricate course traversed by the roller in the most complex dressing has been made sufficiently plain to enable the student to apply it for himself almost unaided by the text."

The chapter on dressing wounds is a feature added to the original text solely in this edition. It deals with general principles considered practically, and gives only those methods which are simple and reliable.

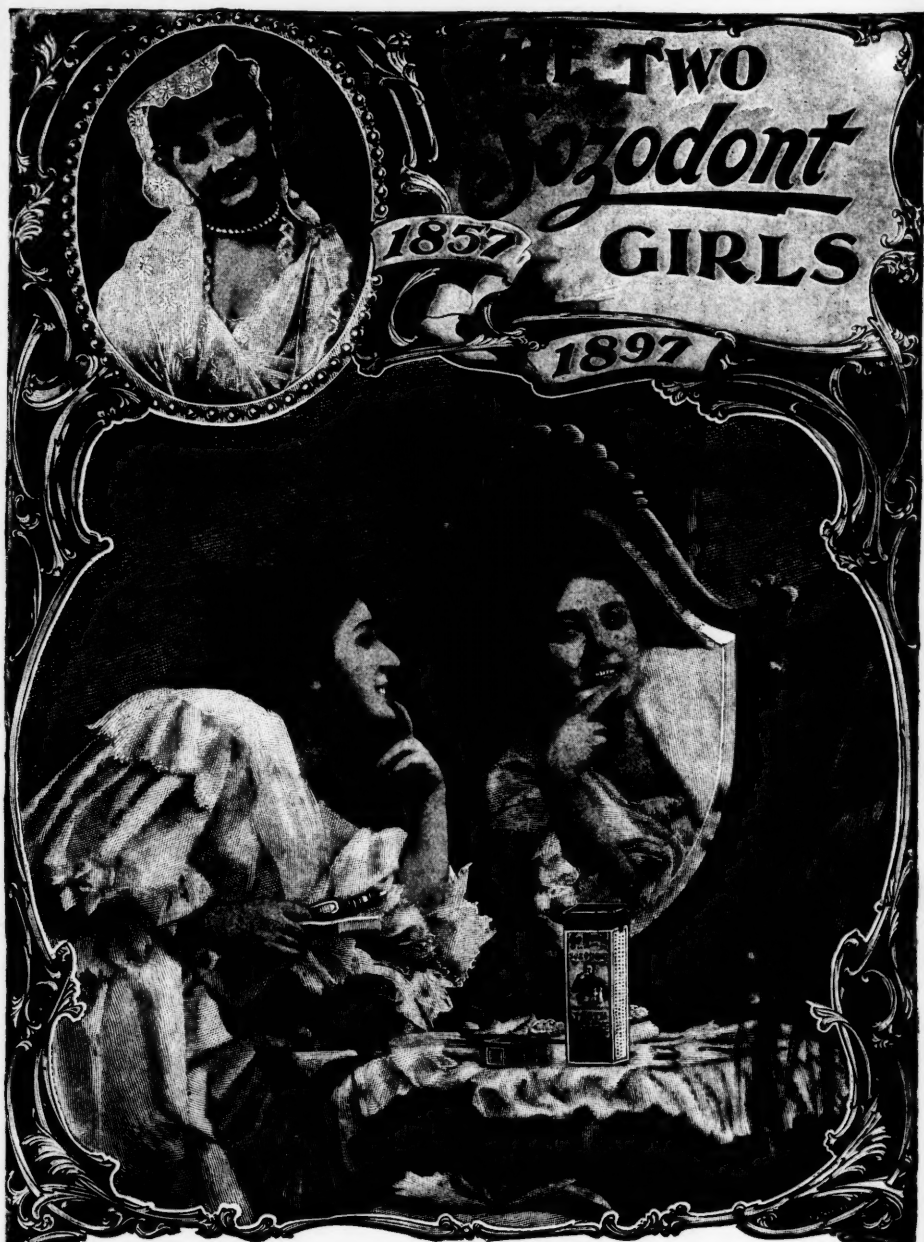
There are eighty illustrations of applied bandages, drawn from the living model and ranging over every member of the human frame. The drawings are as clear and exact as the text,—than which no commendation can be higher.

**The Disorders of Digestion in Infancy and Childhood.** By W. Soltan Fenwick, M.D., B.S. Lond.

The untrodden field of medicine included under the name of *Disorders of Digestion in Infancy and Childhood* has here been surveyed by Dr. W. Soltan Fenwick in a very exhaustive and learned manner. He has produced a work founded on the investigation of over five thousand cases which came under his treatment as Research Scholar to the British Medical Association, and his personal contact with these, joined to his scientific attainments, renders him a high authority in the diagnosis and therapeutics of ailments centring in the organs of digestion in childhood.

Some of the subjects dwelt upon are: Anatomy and Physiology of the Stomach in Infancy; Diet in Infancy; The Dyspeptic Conditions of Infancy; Acute Gastro-Intestinal Catarrh in Infants; the same in its chronic form; Acute Gastric Catarrh in Children; the same in its chronic form; Weak Digestion in Children; Ulceration of the Stomach; The Dyspepsia of Strumous Children; Paroxysmal Hyperacidity; and Dyspepsia dependent upon Disease of other Organs. There are sufficient illustrations, and a handsome text and binding worthy of the important contents.





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IT WORKED.—The young man was bringing to bear all his limited attainments as a contortionist in his efforts to see around the tall, wide hat worn by the sweet girl in front of him.

The young woman whom he was accompanying saw him and pitied him.

Then a knowing smile passed over her face, and she leaned over and whispered loudly enough for the girl with the big hat to hear,—

"What a lovely hat that girl in front of you has on!"

He looked fierce, but said nothing, and the owner of the hat stared straight ahead with a pleased expression.

"What a pity it is," the young woman with the knowing look resumed, "that she doesn't know it isn't on straight!"

The girl in front made a convulsive grab and shifted the hat to one side. Then it didn't feel right, and she shoved it away over to the other side, only to hear in commiserating stage whisper behind her,—

"Poor thing, she'll never get it straight now."

It was too much. The girl in front reached up with a resolute hand, undid the hat, and laid it in her lap, while the young man cast a glance at his companion which was eloquent with undying admiration and eternal gratitude.—*Philadelphia Times.*

A WOMAN'S CONVENTION.—"Now, ladies," said the chairman of the convention, rapping with her gavel, "remember, please, that we must have order. I must ask you to refrain from whispering during the progress of the meeting."

Still the low, sibilant sound from the group of pretty heads that had got together in one corner of the hall continued.

The chairman looked annoyed and rapped with her gavel more severely.

The group of pretty heads broke up, and the whispering ceased in that quarter, but over on the opposite side of the hall a delegate was seen to lean toward her neighbor, and the disagreeable hissing was resumed.

"Is it possible," said the chairman, "that I must repeat my request? You will refrain from whispering, please."

The offending head nodded approvingly, but the whispering did not stop.

"If necessary," said the chairman, with a touch of anger, "I shall become personal in my requests. Will the delegate from Boston kindly postpone her private conversation with her neighbor till the meeting is over?"

The delegate from Boston straightened up in her seat and flushed hotly.

"Is it possible," she exclaimed, "that you meant me?"

"Certainly," said the chairman; "there was no one else whispering at the moment, I believe."

"But," said the delegate from Boston, "I was only saying to my neighbor what a splendid chairman you made, to stop the whispering of those ladies from Ohio over there. I don't see how you can object to my saying that."

"We will have no whispering on any subject," said the chairman, sternly.

And with that at least a dozen heads in different parts of the hall bobbed over toward their neighbors' desks, and the sibilation grew into a prolonged hiss, from which could plainly be distinguished such expressions as "Served her right!" "The idea!" "What a splendid chairman!" etc.

A look of despair came over the chairman's face, and she sat down, with a mute signal to the secretary to go on with the reading of the minutes and let the whisperers have their way.—*Buffalo Express.*

BEGINNING RIGHT.



"Only  
rounded spoonfuls  
of

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**THE SIZE OF HIS HEAD.**—In one of the big stores the other afternoon a stoop-shouldered man with a faded brown beard was clawing over the hats and trying them on, one after another, without appearing to find any to fit him.

"What size are you looking for?" asked one of the salesmen.

"What size?" he said. "Somethin' I kin wear, I reckon."

"Of course; but what's your number?"

"You don't number a man when he comes in here to buy a hat, do you?"

"Certainly not. I mean what's the number of the——"

"Don't you s'pose I'll know when I come to a hat that fits me? I ain't no spring chicken, young man. I've bought hats 'fore this. You go on waitin' on customers. I'll find what I'm lookin' fur after a while. I've got plenty of time."

"So have I. Time is nothing to me. I can stand here all day and watch you trying on hats, but it isn't necessary. If you can tell me what size of hat you wear, I can give you half a dozen of that size to try on. It will save you some trouble, and won't be quite so hard on the assortment."

The customer reflected.

"Well, that's reasonable," he said. "Young man, I might as well tell you the truth. I've clean forgot the size hat I wear. I never can remember it. I know I wear a No. 9 shoe, though. A No. 9 hat would be about the right thing, wouldn't it?"—*Chicago Tribune*.

A WOMAN arrested in a Paris suburb for illegally setting off fireworks said in court that she was merely celebrating the anniversary of her husband's death.

**THE FATE OF OLD PIANOS.**—About eighty thousand pianos are now being manufactured annually in America, and they are practically all for home consumption. Last year only eight hundred and ten instruments were shipped abroad. Most of them went to South America, but a few were sent to Germany.

We get from Europe far fewer pianos even than we send there. There has been an effort made among fashionable folks to introduce here an English make; it is a fine instrument at home, but it won't do for America, because our climate is so much dryer than the English that the wood shrinks and warps here ruinously.

Pianos little need protective laws. In every case it is the same: changes of climate affect all makes injuriously.

One famous American firm has met the difficulty by establishing a factory in Hamburg for the German market.

Germany sends some pianos to South America and to Australia, and altogether she makes as many as we do. France and England turn out only forty thousand a year. The growth of the business here has been great, for in 1860 our output was only thirty thousand. There are about a hundred factories in and about New York.

Pianos seem to disappear from the world almost as mysteriously as pins; perhaps, considering their size, the fact that the streets are not blocked with cast-off pianos is more curious than that the face of the earth fails to be overlaid with pins. An experienced New York dealer says that he has known of but three that were cut up for kindling-wood. Yet they often sell for little more than so much pine would bring. One second-hand dealer says he bought six last week for fifty dollars.—*Kansas City Star*.

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"HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE?"—The Scriptures may be a dangerous weapon to put into the hands of those who pervert their meaning, either intentionally or through want of understanding. Every one has heard how Lorenzo Dow, having resolved to preach a sermon against women's tall bonnets, took for his text the words "Topknot, come down," which he had ingeniously perverted from the passage, "Let him which is on the house-top not come down."

Less artful than this, but quite as amusing, was the unconscious error made by a young student of theology at Wilbraham Seminary, whose case was recently related by an old divine. The student went out one Saturday to preach his trial sermon. When he returned Monday, the venerable Dr. X. said to him,—

"Well, how did you get along?"

"Oh, very well, I thought."

"Glad to hear it. What was your text?"

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

"Very good text,—very good text. How did you handle it?"

"Well, first I showed them how great this salvation was——"

"That's right. And then——?"

"And then I told them how they might escape if they neglected it."—

*Youth's Companion.*

MILKMAIDS IN PICTURES.—There are few known instances of a milkmaid being depicted on the proper side of a cow in pictures. The milker ought to sit with her right hand toward the cow's head, but in pictures she is invariably shown (as far as my observation goes) on the other,—that is to say, on the wrong side.—*Notes and Queries.*

A ROYAL YARN.—One of the most elaborate newspaper hoaxes ever printed appeared in Paris, and the peculiar thing about it was the large share of credence with which it was received not only by the Parisians themselves, but by the people of France generally. The story in brief, says the *London Mail*, was that the Queen of England had been dead for eighteen years, but that her death had been kept a profound secret and was known only to a few persons in the British Empire.

The story related with circumstantial detail that Queen Victoria passed away quite suddenly in the fall of 1878, but that for state reasons it was deemed best to keep her demise a profound secret. Accordingly, a woman in humble circumstances, of about the same age as the queen, to whom she bore a striking resemblance, was discovered and installed in the place of the dead sovereign, whose body was secretly buried in a vault beneath one of the royal residences.

The woman who was to impersonate the dead queen was carefully coached in the part she was to play, and in order to lessen the risk of detection it was publicly given out that the sovereign would pass the winter abroad, as she had determined to live in retirement for a number of months. In the seclusion of a little foreign town the impersonator of royalty was most assiduously trained in her part, and, being a woman of wonderful cleverness and discretion, she has been able to continue the deception to this day.

The story was naturally not long in travelling across the English Channel to London, where those who heard it regarded the matter as one of the best jokes of the season.—*St. Louis Post-Dispatch.*



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is to keep some **Pearline** in a sifter, ready to use for floor-washing, dish-washing, etc., etc. You sprinkle a little over the floor, for instance, and then just wash it over with a wet cloth. See how much more convenient to use than soap, to say nothing of the easier work!

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AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION is cheaper than any quantity of cure. Don't give children narcotics or sedatives. They are unnecessary when the infant is properly nourished, as it will be if brought up on the Gail Borden Eagle Brand Condensed Milk.

**SHARK POST-OFFICE.**—"One afternoon, when we were in the Indian Ocean," said the captain, "I noticed a shark swimming round the ship, and I didn't like it a bit. You know the superstition to the effect that a following shark presages the death of one of the ship's company. He sailed round us all the next day and the next after that, and I determined to catch him and quell my uneasiness. We baited a hook, and after a short time captured and killed him. Then we cut him up. Do you know what we found in that shark's inside? No? Well, a newspaper unopened, and it will surprise you, as it did me, when I tell you that it was addressed to me."

A shout of great laughter went up from the captain's audience, who winked at each other unblushingly. He, however, took all the bantering in good part, and when the jeers were ended he said,—

"Now, gentlemen, I'll tell you how it happened. I found that my children had been skylarking the day before in the cabin. They found among the mass of reading that had been brought aboard some unopened newspapers addressed to me. They had been throwing these newspapers at each other, and one of them went out of the port-hole. The shark saw it, of course, and gobbled it down, and that was how it happened. Now, gentlemen, judge for yourselves the truth of my story."—*London Answers.*

**A DISAPPOINTED YOUNGSTER.**—Paderewski's son, when a little boy, asked his father, who was playing in Paris at the time, whether he might go to the Cirque, where Paderewski was to perform. The distinguished pianist consented. When the lad came home, his father asked him how he had enjoyed himself. "Oh, not at all!" was the youngster's reply. "It was the dullest circus I have ever been to. I expected to see you go through hoops, but you only played at the piano, just as you do at home."

**SHE DAZED THE DOCTOR.**—The *Washington Star* says that a lady recently called at the office of a prominent Washington physician who is small and boyish in appearance. "Boy," she said, addressing him, "is the doctor in? But I can see he is not." "He is in," began the physician, but the visitor interrupted him. "Oh, he's in, is he? Then he's engaged. I'll wait. Does he allow you to sit at his desk that way?" "Madam!" "Oh, of course you would say he does, but I'll warrant you'll catch it if he sees you there. You look sort of pale. I should think the doctor would give you something to make you stronger. Your ma ought to send you into the country. That would make you grow. How soon do you think the doctor will be disengaged?" "Madam, I tried to tell you before—I do not think you can see the doctor to-day." "Well, I'll come next time I'm in town. But you ought to quit staying in this office and go into the country. Not that it is any of my business, but I do hate to see boys look so pale and puny." She disappeared, and the doctor is wondering what she will say when she calls next time she comes into the city.

**THE REVISED VERSION.**—"I think," said the stage manager, thoughtfully, "that, in view of the prevailing craze, when you come to that passage, 'The apparel oft proclaims the man,' you'd better add 'nit' to it, in order to prevent the gallery from guying you. It's just as well to have it understood that we're up to the times and can readily see where Shakespeare fell down."

He was the same manager who insisted upon putting Ophelia in bloomers.—*Chicago Post.*

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**FOOD VALUE OF COCOA.**—The *International Journal of Surgery* says, "Experience has shown that a properly prepared cocoa product constitutes an ideal beverage for invalids and convalescents, acting as a mild nerve stimulant and at the same time supplying a considerable amount of available nutritive material.

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**A TERRIBLE JOKER.**—Ivan the Terrible forgot neither his devotions nor his diversions. His palace alternately resounded with praying and carousing. For his pastime bears were brought from Novgorod. When from his window he perceived a group of citizens collected, he let slip two or three of these ferocious animals, and his delight on beholding the flight of the terrified creatures, and especially on hearing the cries of the victims, was unbounded. His bursts of laughter were loud and long-continued. To console those who were maimed for life he would sometimes send each of them a small piece of gold.

Another of his chief amusements was in the company of jesters, whose duty it was to divert him, especially before and after any executions, but they often paid dearly for an unseasonable joke.

Among these none was more distinguished than Prince Gvosdef, who held a high rank at court.

The Czar, being one day dissatisfied with a jest, poured over the prince's head the boiling contents of a soup-basin. The agonized wretch prepared to retreat from the table, but the tyrant struck him with a knife, and he fell senseless to the floor. Dr. Arnolph was instantly called.

"Save my good servant!" cried the Czar. "I have jested with him a little too hard."

"So hard," replied the other, "that only God and your majesty can restore him to life. He no longer breathes."

Ivan expressed his contempt, called the deceased favorite a dog, and continued his amusements.

Another day, while he sat at table, the waywode of Staritza, Boris Titof, appeared, bowed to the ground, and saluted him after the customary manner.

"God save thee, my dear waywode! Thou deservest a proof of my favor."

He seized a knife and cut off an ear. Titof thanked the Czar for his gracious favor, and wished him a happy reign.—*Pearson's Weekly*.

**AS OTHERS SEE US.**—"Elizabeth Stuart Phelps," says the *Boston Transcript*, "had a little dog in the days when she lived with two other women in her 'Old Maid's Paradise,' before she added Ward to her name. This little dog was named Daniel Deronda, and she tells of hearing from the window of that famous little place of hers at Gloucester a little boy, who evidently knew her little dog, asking his mother, 'Mamma, is that where the Derondas live?' 'Such was human fame,' she cries, 'and such it will ever be! The eyes that see us with their own focus, not from ours or with ours.'"

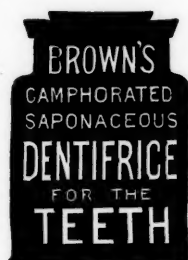


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MY DEAR SIR,—It gives me pleasure to recommend in the highest terms your "Kneaded Rubber." The pupils of my school both here and at Shinnecock use the rubber, and I assure you we would not know how to get on without it.

Very sincerely,

WM. M. CHASE.

**THE LORD CHANCELLOR.**—The lord chancellor is the only member of the British cabinet who is not allowed to go outside of Great Britain. This is because he must have the great seal in his personal custody, and to take the great seal outside of Great Britain would almost be an act of high treason. When Cardinal Wolsey was lord chancellor, he took it with him on a visit to France, and thereby hastened his fall, in the opinion of many. The great seal, which is a double silver die, into which molten wax is poured when an impression is required for a state document, was once used for culinary purposes. While Lord Chancellor Brougham was staying, in 1833, at Rothiemurchus, the Scottish residence of the then dowager Duchess of Bedford, the ladies of the party got possession of the great seal and hid it, much to the lord keeper's distress of mind, for he feared it was lost. He was blindfolded by the ladies and sent to search for it in the drawing-room. At last, to his intense joy, he dragged it forth from a tea-chest, and then, to celebrate its recovery, used it for making pancakes in the kitchen.—*New York Tribune*.

**THE INVENTION OF ENVELOPES.**—The invention of envelopes is within the memory of middle-aged persons, and was the result of a Brighton (England) stationer's endeavor to make his store look attractive. He took a fancy for ornamenting his store-windows with high piles of paper, graduated from the highest to the smallest size in use. To bring his pyramid to a point, he cut cardboard into very minute squares. Ladies took these cards to be small-sized note-paper, and voted it "perfectly lovely." So great was the demand that the stationer found it desirable to cut paper the size so much admired. But there was one difficulty. The little notes were so small that when folded there was no space for the address, so after some thought the idea of an envelope pierced the stationer's brain. He had them cut by a metal plate, and soon, so great was the demand, he commissioned a dozen houses to manufacture them for him. From such small beginnings came this important branch of the stationery business.—*Inventive Age*.

"UPSETTIN'."—A party of tourists were out riding in Kansas one afternoon, when they came to an old house in the door-yard of which were some peach-trees loaded with magnificent yellow peaches.

"Let's see if we can't buy some," said one of the party, and he agreed to go to the door and ask for a basket of the peaches.

A wiry, active little woman came to the door.

"Howdy do?" she said, cheerily. "Hot an' dusty, ain't it? We need rain turribly. 'Scuse the looks o' my house. We're all in a clutter here now. I don't keep my house in such a mess as this all the time, I kin tell ye, but the fact is we're all upset to-day. To come right out an' tell the honest truth, my ole man went an' committed suicide right after breakfast, an' it's kind o' upset things gen'rally an' put us all about. Ye know that a reg'lar death in the family is awfully upsettin', an' when it comes to a suicide it's a good deal more so.

"I never was quite so upset. If he'd only ben consid'rate enough to choose some other day but a Monday, when I have got both bakin' an' washin' on hand! Some peaches? Oh, help yourselves to all you want. I'd go out an' pick 'em for you if he hadn't cut up this hangin' himself caper. It's turrible upsettin' all round."—*New York World*.

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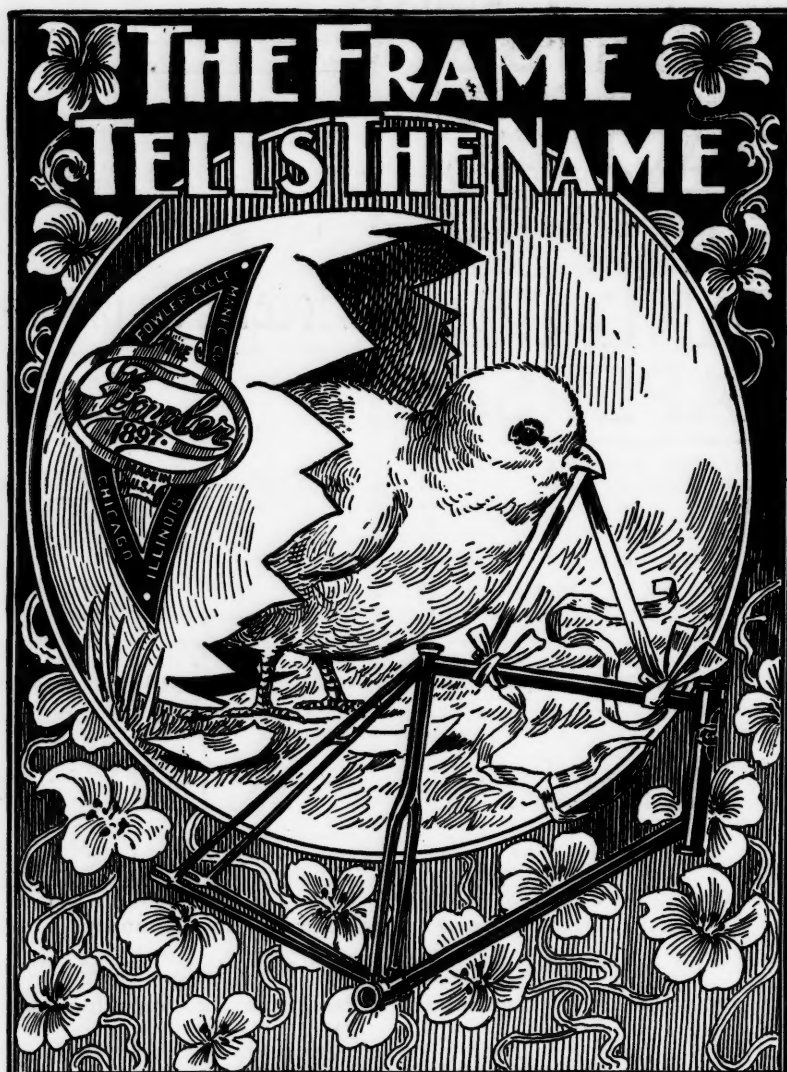
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